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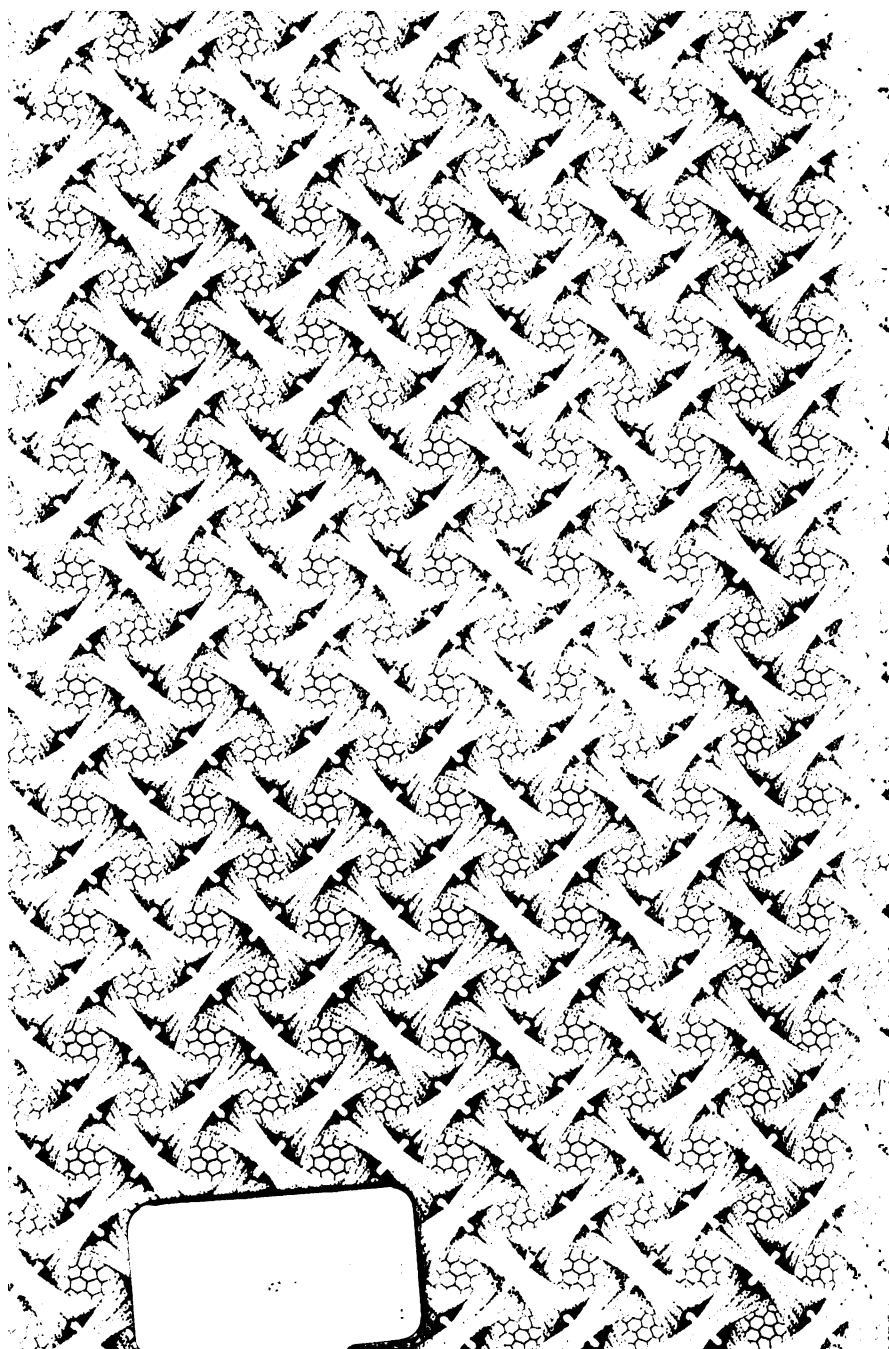


# RUTH HESTON









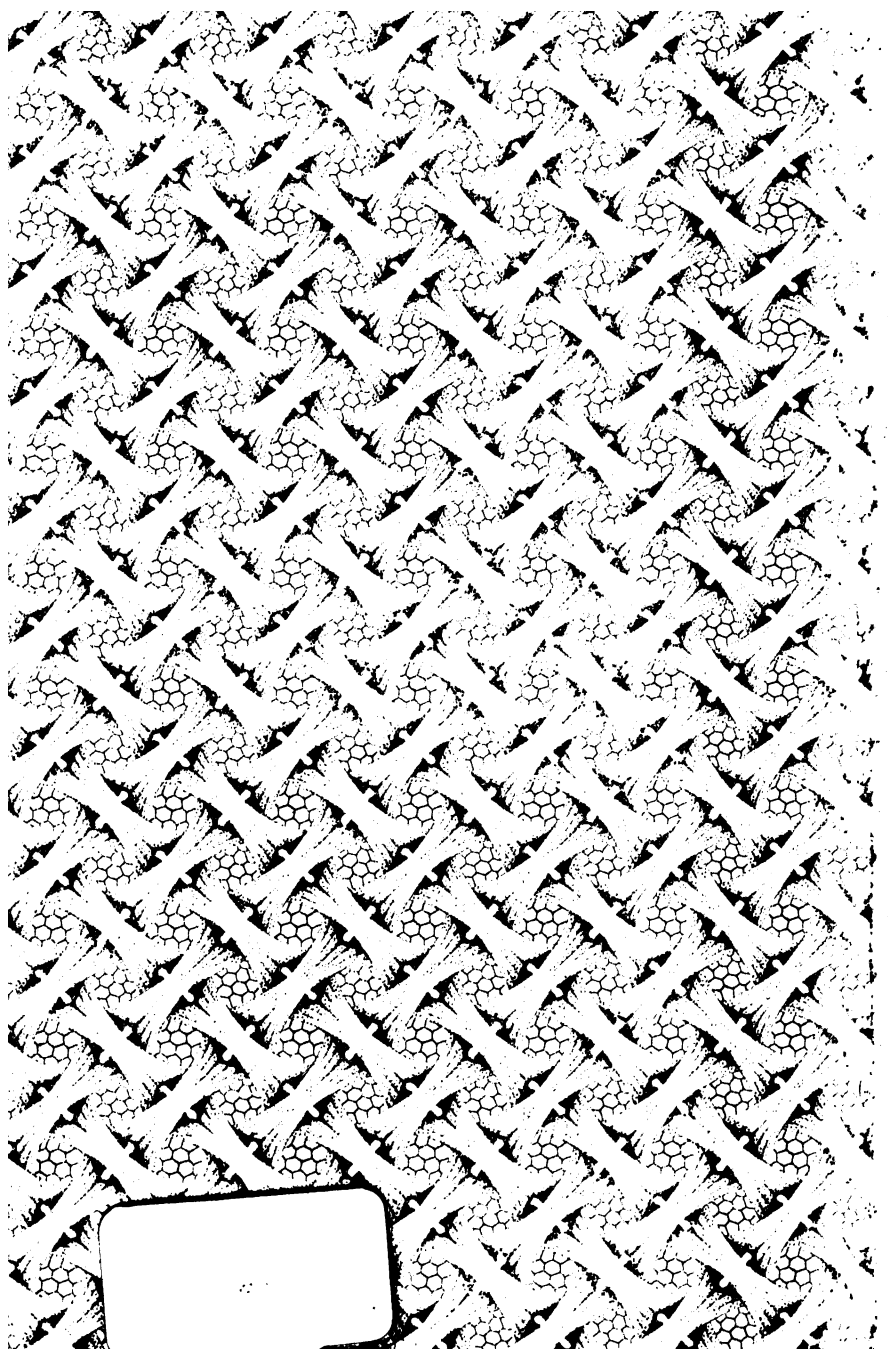




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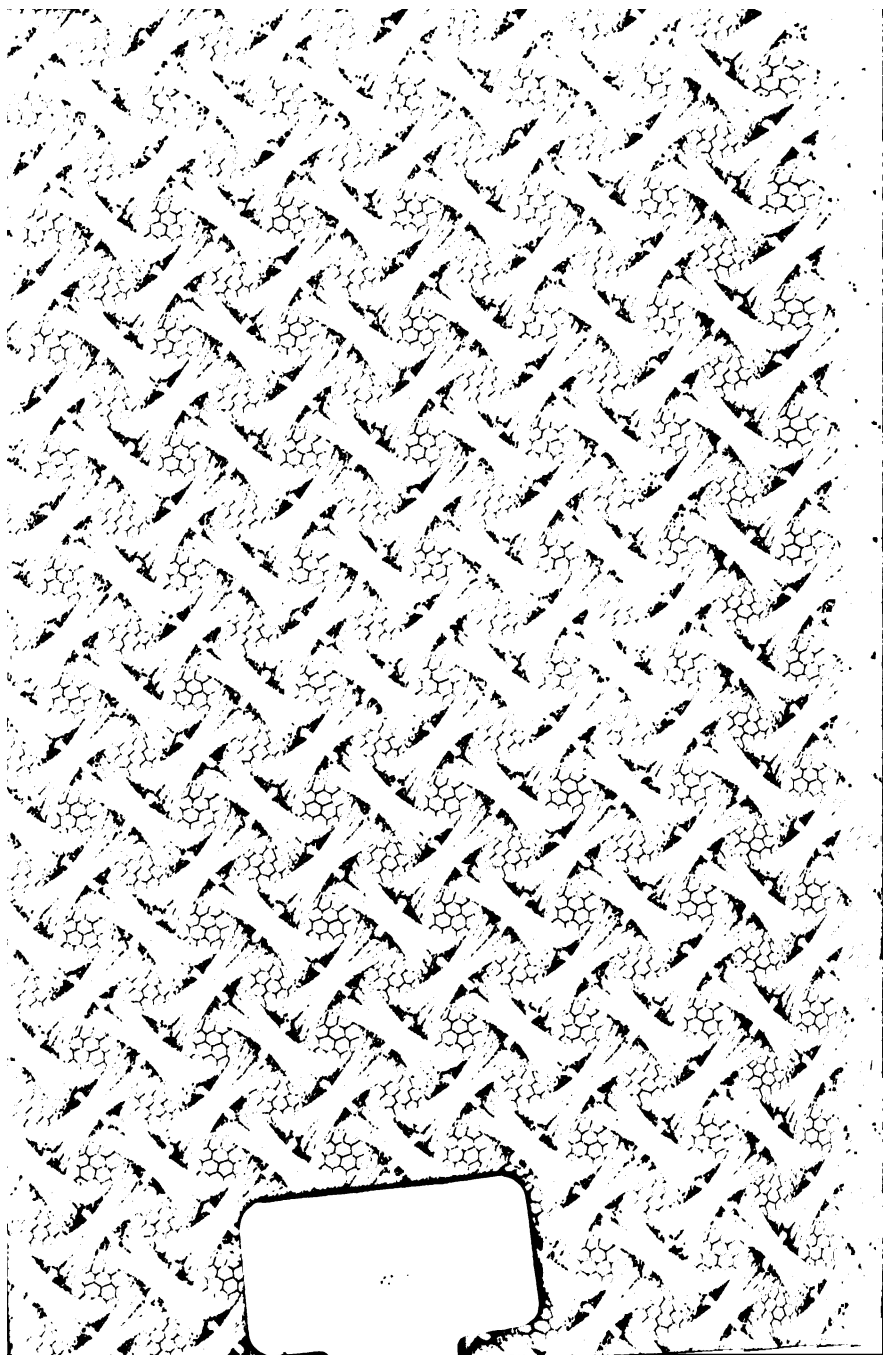
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*SOME NOTES BY A BROTHER AND SISTER.*













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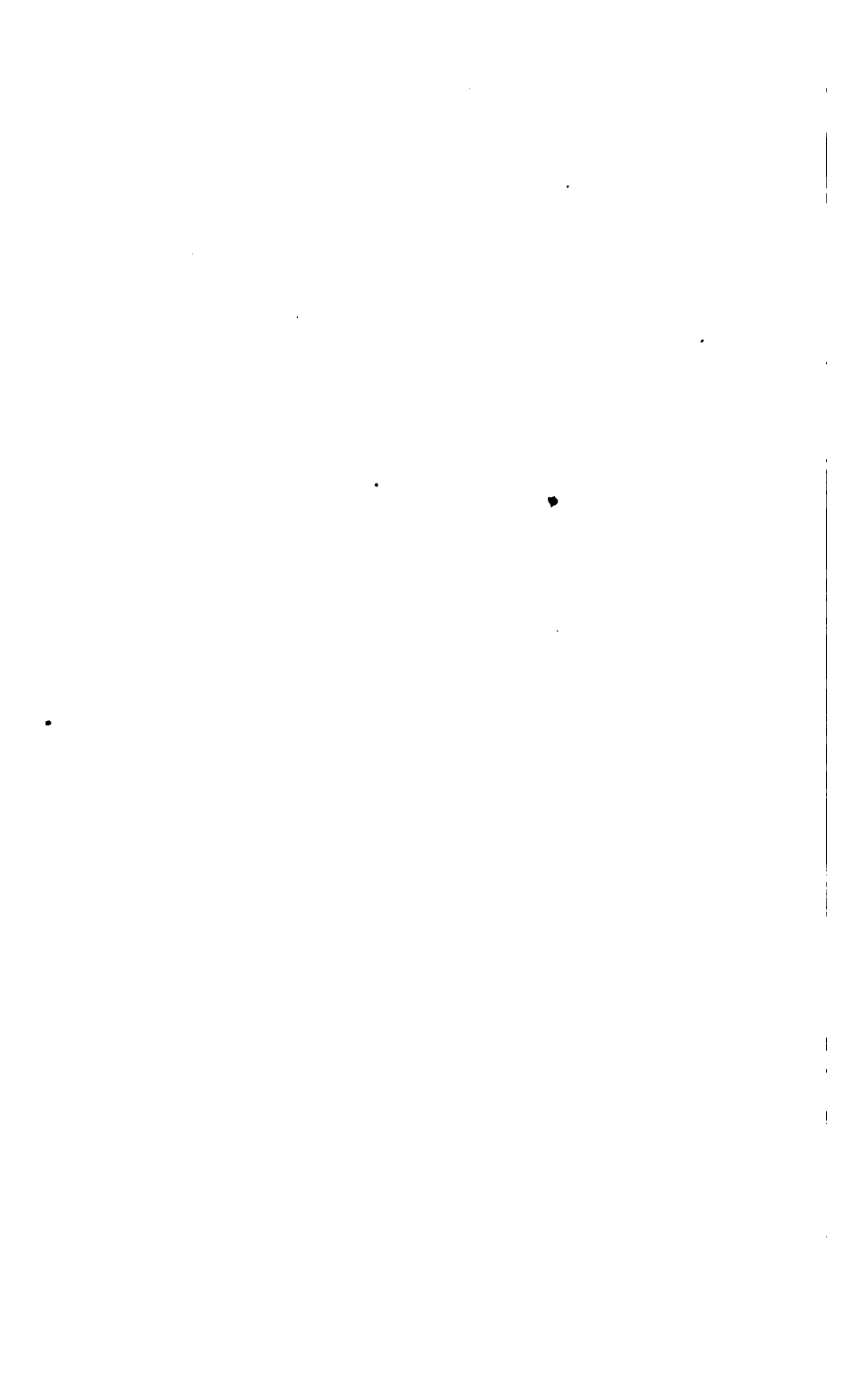


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# RUTHIESTON:

Some Notes by

A BROTHER AND SISTER.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE CHORISTER BROTHERS," "AULD FERNIES' SON,"  
ETC. ETC.



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# RUTHIESTON :

*SOME NOTES BY A BROTHER AND SISTER.*

Robert.

## CHAPTER I.

“RUTHIESTON ! Ruthieston !”

I think, as long as I live, I shall never quite lose my first association with that cry, or forget the feeling with which I found myself at the end of that journey. I had been travelling all day, and all the previous night, with little break between the night and day stages ; and I felt as hot and tired and dusty and sooty as a traveller usually does under those circumstances. But when I put my head out of the carriage window, and stepped down on the platform of that little bright breezy station, no cold-water bath, no glass of champagne that ever sparkled, was half so refreshing and exhilarating as that clear bracing air.

My arrival there was the realization of a vision—a purpose of some six years' standing. Before that time my knowledge of ecclesiastical affairs in Scotland was that of the ordinary Englishman who has never given much thought to the subject. I believed that though, here and there, for the benefit of English grouse-shooters and pleasure-seekers, there might exist an *English* church where the service was conducted by an *English* clergyman, the country in its length and breadth was wholly given up to Presbyterianism. While, as for a Scotch bishop, I had heard of such a thing, just as I knew there was a Bishop of Jerusalem ; but I knew about as much of one as of the other.

About that time, however, namely, six years ago, an accidental circumstance (as we say) brought the subject before me in a manner that enlisted both my interest and sympathy. I need not go over details ; suffice it that my attention having been directed to the subject, I did not rest here or remain content in my ignorance. I read with avidity every book or article, and questioned with still greater avidity every informant, at all likely to enlighten me. I learnt all I could of the history of the Scottish Church : I heard of her persecutions, her struggles, her witnesses, her growth, her vitality. My vocation had long before been chosen ; and I now cherished the desire, almost romantic in its ardour, of, as soon as I should be ordained, devoting myself, heart and soul, to working in and for this glorious branch of the Catholic and National Church.

A good deal, however, lay between my desire and its fulfilment. I had few acquaintance and no interest in Scotland; and my father strongly deprecated my endeavouring to obtain my object through the medium of advertisements; being of opinion that I ought to begin my work, and gain some experience nearer home, before venturing on entirely new ground.

I appreciated my father's discretion better after four years spent as his curate, in a populous country district in the south of England; and it was with a chastened though no less fervent joy that I learnt, at the end of that time, that the fulfilment of my long-cherished wish was in my power. Through the kind exertions of a friend who had long been aware of it, I had been recommended to the bishop of a certain diocese for the charge of the Episcopal flock of Ruthieston, N.B., which had been for some time without a shepherd.

My mind was not long in making up. My father now gave me his full sanction; and so it came about that on this bright early summer afternoon I and my goods and chattels were landed at the little station.

Little, did I say? It is large for a country station, with covered buildings on two sides; and the platform teems with travellers. Ruthieston is a junction, as well as a thriving, growing, pushing country town, spreading north and south in solid granite-built, blue-slatted houses, and staid, sober-looking streets, with several church-like buildings raising their heads above the ordinary line of roofs. I wonder which is *my* church.



I saw my luggage consigned to the hotel bus, and sent it on, intending to reconnoitre a little before following it. My first business must be to find a lodging. A parsonage house, I knew, was being built for the Episcopal clergyman, but was not nearly completed. I thought I might be able to get some information at the station; so when the bustle of arrivals had a little subsided, and the train had steamed on northwards, I addressed myself to the station-master, a very civil-spoken official, asking if he could tell me of any good lodging to let in the town.

"No, I do not know any," he replied deliberately: "I stop on the other side" (indicating the opposite bank of the railway, which was dotted with several little houses), "and I'm not often up in the town. But I'll ask Mr." (some long name which my English ears do not readily catch); "he stays up about High Street; he'll maybe know. Can ye tell this gentleman" (this to a brisk, pleasant-looking young man who had just come up) "of any rooms to let up your way, ey now?"

The person appealed to considered for a moment, glancing at me, and then said:

"The most of the High Street lodgings are let, unless Miss Skinner's at the Post Office—I know she can give a room."

"In which direction is that?" I asked.

"This way; it's no distance from the hotel. I am going up to High Street; I could point out the house to you, sir, if you please."

I accepted his offer, and we walked out of the station together.

I was favourably impressed by the appearance of my guide. He was of about middle height, wiry and active-looking, with brown hair, brown eyes, and an honest brown face—a clean, wholesome, handsome specimen of young Scotland of the middle class. Of course, though, I assume he is a Presbyterian. I should half like to ask him to what body he belongs, but that the question would savour of impertinence, curiosity, or an insane desire to begin proselytizing immediately. I feel that he has taken *me* in at once with those knowing eyes of his, which look at me as much as to say, “Ah, my fine fellow, I see what you are; but as a stranger I am bound to be civil to you.”

We are nearly opposite a pretentious-looking edifice of would-be ecclesiastical character. “What church is that?” I ask.

“That’s the new Free church, sir, which is just completed. Quite throws the old parish church into the shade, does it not?” (pointing to a not distant building, that certainly rejoiced in what has been called the “ugliness of holiness.”) “The Episcopal chapel is behind us—to your left, sir—quite near the station.” I follow the direction of his finger, and discern the outline of what does look something like a church, with a small chancel and crosses on the gables.

My friend calls it a chapel, so that is decisive to me. He *must* be a Presbyterian; of the kirks, probably Free.

There was a funny twinkle in his eye when he compared the two buildings, also when he looks at me sometimes, which I suppose is what the Scotch call "pawky." I dare say he is quizzing me in his sleeve ; but it is not the least impertinent or offensive, as a middle-class Englishman's quiz often is. However, I shall ask no more ecclesiastical questions of him.

"Is the town full just now?" is my next.

"Well, yes, sir, pretty full. The principal lodgings are let or engaged for the autumn. They say it is to be a very good year for the trade of the town, though we do not depend here upon the summer visitors so much as in many places."

"We." So he identifies himself with the trade of the town. He looks like a tradesman of some kind : perhaps he is going to solicit my custom. He speaks very good English, but with an accent something like a foreigner's : nothing like the very ugly twang I heard at the Lowland stations.

We have reached a street running at right angles to the road we had come.

"Now, sir," says my guide, "we are in High Street ; that is the hotel. The Post Office is six doors to the left—Miss Skinner's. Good-bye, sir." And with a civil salute he turned and walked down the street.

I went into the hotel and saw my room, then ordered some tea—a not unseasonable refreshment. After tea I must go at once and see Miss Skinner, before looking at my church even ; for to-morrow is Saturday, and

I am anxious to be settled before Sunday; besides, if I do not look sharp the room may be taken.

I sought the Post Office, which is also a little shop for stationery and miscellaneous fancy articles. Rather shabby and dusty they looked, as if they had been a good while in stock. A few pictures, prints, and photographs, also for sale if any one could be found to purchase, hung against the walls. A young woman was standing behind the counter near the telegraph. A very plain young woman, I saw at once; and yet her face touched me, I could hardly say why. It was a pale, thin, high cheek-boned face; the most salient feature the wide, thin-lipped mouth, disclosing a large proportion of tooth when she opened it to smile or speak; but her light brown hair was parted in natural waves—not the modern curled fringe—over a not uncomely brow, and there was a sort of wistful earnestness in her honest gray-green eyes. She was slight and spare, with one of those ill-assorted, angular figures that give the beholder an uncomfortable consciousness of elbows. Not the typical “bonnie lassie” whom poets sing, certainly; but none the less a good girl, I dare say.

“I wished to see Miss Skinner,” I began. “I understood she kept lodgings.”

“I’ll call my aunt,” said the girl, and she went into a little inner room off the shop. Thence issued a few moments after the funniest little figure of an old woman imaginable.

A little dried-up, wizened face, almost like a skull, with sharp twinkling black eyes that seemed to look into every corner of you, and elfish locks of hair scarcely touched with gray. On her head she wore what used to be called, when it first came into fashion, a "pork-pie" hat, with some wonderful feather at the side. A short stuff gown and black close-fitting jacket completed the curious costume.

"Good evening, Miss Skinner. I called to ask if I can get rooms here."

"Well, yes, I have rooms; but I don't know if they'll maybe shuit you, sir. A parlour and bedroom, I dare say, it'll be ye were wantin'?"

I said that it was.

"Eh, well, ye may see what I have. Is there onybody in the parlour ey now, Tibbie?" (this to the young woman.) "No? Then maybe ye'll be pleased to step up and see them now."

She led the way, and I followed, up a narrow, dark stair to a floor which appeared to contain three rooms: one—into which she showed me—a small sitting-room, with evident tokens of occupation.

"Aye, this is the parlour. Mr. Macaldowie has it in the mean time, but he said, if I had an offer for the two, I would get it, and the one room would do wi' him. Ye've a nice cheerful outlook up and down the street; ye'll no get a better in Ruthieston, I believe," said Miss Skinner, going to the window and drawing up the blind.

I gaze round the room, wondering inwardly who and what Mr. Macaldowie may be. An ardent smoker, to judge by the odour that prevails in the apartment: also he plays the violin, for there is one hanging up; and the concertina! I think of my sermons, and wonder how we shall agree. Perhaps, if he is a violent Presbyterian, he will play on purpose to annoy me! But beggars must not be choosers, and the room is decent and comfortable-looking.

The bedroom opens out of it—a tiny place with one sloping side to the roof, a bed built apparently into the wall under it (in which I am sure I shall knock my head), and a window looking into all sorts of back premises. I shall hardly have room for my bath in it, and the wardrobe accommodation is terribly limited. However, I can but give it a trial; so I asked Miss Skinner how soon I could come in, as I wished to be settled at once.

“How soon? Well, this is Friday—let us have a day to move his things, and that—I suppose ye might get in to-morrow night, sir, if ye was wantin’.”

I thought this reasonable; and having inquired the rent, and found it also reasonable, I concluded my bargain on that head with Miss Skinner. I then asked her if she could inform me where I could get the keys of the Episcopal church.

“Yes, sir, I can. It’s Mr. Rae ’at keeps the keys o’ the chaipel. He stops in Thistle Place; ye’ll easily find it if ye go up the street a bittie and take the



nearest turn to the right. He's a shoemaker to trade, Mr. Rae; his house is No. 9."

I thanked her, and went in search of No. 9, Thistle Lane. I found Mr. Rae in the bosom of his family—in the middle of his tea, I am afraid; but he jumped up with great alacrity on my introducing myself, and would hear of no delay in accompanying me to the church, whither we therefore bent our steps.

Mr. Rae is a little wiry-looking man, about sixty, I should say, at a glance; very active, and exceedingly respectful in his manner; chatty and communicative.

He informs me, as we go along, that he has been about the church "since ever it was built—a maitter of some five-and-thirty years ago," and that I am the eighth minister he has seen: none of my predecessors apparently having been very long in the tenure of the charge, with one exception, a Mr. M'Corquhodale, who held it twelve years out of the thirty-five, and, Mr. Rae assures me, was "very well respectit." Mr. Rae's dialect is less easy of understanding than my first friend's, and I find he does not always understand me. We have now reached the church—a small but outwardly neat building; and as Mr. Rae lets me in at the little south door, I am agreeably surprised by the capabilities of the interior. I say advisedly capabilities, for there are many deficiencies; and after our beautifully restored and decorated parish church at home, this sanctuary looks painfully bare; no altar-cross, candles, or vases,

and the hangings are faded, though not of inferior material.

The dedication of the church is St. Peter. I must say I am a little disappointed at this. I should have liked some thorough-going Scottish saint—St. Ternan, St. Ninian, or St. Margaret. St. Peter's (beautiful as the associations are) has a common-place, if not Cockney sound about it. Northern Scotland, too, is a very land of saints, every district being under its own especial tutelage, and in many instances bearing the name of its patron conjointly with its own. St. Serf, I understand, is the patron of this district, and I have since seen a ruin near here dedicated in his name. But the founders of the present church, I take it, cared little for local hagiology, and saw fit to call their edifice St. Peter's. Anywhere else, however, I should rejoice in the dedication; and at any rate his day falls at a happy season for a parish festival.

Having taken note of most things in the church—including the harmonium, and the very miscellaneous collection of music (chiefly manuscript) lying rather untidily in the corner behind it—I drew Mr. Rae into the vestry for a little talk.

I find that there have been two services on Sundays, at 11.45 A.M. and 5 P.M. Celebrations on the first Sunday in the month — “at least that always was the way,” says my informant, “till Mr. Hill came. He was to have it once in the fortnight, and syne *every* Sunday, if so be that he could have

remained ; but there's very few stops when it's so often, ye see."

"Any week-day services?"

"Eh, no, but just in Lent; upon Wednesdays and Fridays. Mr. Hill commenced to have the prayers ilka day, and was to have service upo' Saints' days, if he could get any to come to them; but he couldna carry it on."

I felt a sensation of gratitude towards my unknown predecessor, who had broken the ice for me in so many ways. I asked if there was any choir.

Mr. Rae gave a rather significant little chuckle.

"Kyre? Eh, no, sir. Just a few yoong folks sits beside the harmonium, and practises the hymns a bittie with the Miss Glens before church. Mr. Hill did speak about getting up a regular kyre, but the people was very strong against it—speycially Major Glen. He spoke about withdrawin' his daughters—it's the Miss Glens give us the music, ye ken—and so it just sort o' fell through. And he never got many like to jine in wi' it, unless twa-three lads and Mr. Macaldowie."

"Ah! Who's Mr. Macaldowie?"

"Well, I believe he's a good bittie better, but I dinna think he does anything at the singing eynow."

I stared. Then it suddenly dawned upon me that Mr. Rae understood my query, in his own language, to be, "Hoo's Mr. Macaldowie?" translating it into a tender inquiry after his health. Absurd as the mistake was, I let it pass. No doubt my future fellow-lodger is

out here for his health. I am supposed to know all about it: no doubt I shall soon, and only too much, with that orchestra of instruments of wind and string of which I had a vision. I trust his health does not allow him to include the cornopean; but then, if he is a Churchman——

In the mean time Mr. Rae goes chatting on.

“Ye see, Mr. Hill’s health gave way, and syne he wasna fit to do the half of what he would ha’ liket; and so, what with his health together, and that he didna just get on vera well with the congregation, he was better resignin’, tho’ he was a very well-intentioned young gentleman, and clivver, it was said.”

“What was the reason he did not get on with them?”

“Aweel, sir,”—Mr. Rae became very knowing and confidential—“I wouldna like to just exac’ly say, for I dinna oonderstand a’ the ins and oots maybe, so as I can explain them right to *you*; but if I may say so much, I think he was a little too fond of makkin’ *cheenges*—and some folks they don’t like cheenges from what they’ve been always used to,” he ended, with a deprecatory little laugh.

I knew only too well, I was afraid, what he meant, and that church-folk in Scotland might be as difficult to deal with and to please as some elsewhere; but I was not going to let the thought vex me.

I had been coaching myself carefully in the rules and regulations of the Representative Church Council, and

I wished to ascertain if there were regularly-constituted office-bearers in my congregation, and if so, who (not "hoo") they were.

"Major Glen is the lay representative," Mr. Rae says. "Mr. Hill was ill about getting Mr. Lindsay to take it" (at first I attributed Mr. Hill's ill health to this cause, but I find he was only anxious),—"ye see, this cheenge of rules came in while Mr. Hill was here—but the most of the people wished the Major, and Mr. Lindsay, being a quiet, retiring gentleman, would not oppose him, so Major Glen has been in ever since. Mr. Hill was his own secretary and treasurer for a' the time, tho' he didna like it; and a heap o' trouble he took, I sanna say, collecting the subscriptions, for as little as he got."

I must own to myself that Mr. Rae's conversation is not enlivening. He chuckles grimly again over the smallness of the weekly offertory, as entered in a book in the vestry; and it appears that even the seat-rents—the chief source of the clergyman's revenue—are a fluctuating and uncertain concern. (I am an advocate myself of the free and open system, where it is practicable; but here, as in many other parishes, I am told, the sittings are let annually, at so much per head, or per family; and I fancy some of us could ill afford to dispense with this item in our income.) However, I will not allow myself to be troubled. I am not a very expensive character; and with what I can see, and what I may get from the Equal Dividend, I hope to

make a living without being a serious drag to them at home. When the parsonage house, which will be rent free, is finished and habitable, they have promised to spare my elder sister Charlotte to keep house with me, and she is the best housekeeper and thriftiest manager in the world, so we are certain to get on. She is capital at all woman's work in a parish too, and a famous church musician; so then I shall be independent of Major and the Misses Glen, should they run rusty.

In a corner of the vestry my eye fell upon a large wooden cross, with a stand; some fragments of moss and dried leaves still clinging to it. I asked what it was.

"Eh, Mr. Hill got it made for the Harvest Thanksgiving last year. He had it done up, real tasty, with corn and berries; and afterwards he was to let it sit aboove the Table, just as it was, ilka day. But when Mr. Hill went away, the Major bid me take it out of that; so I thought I would just set it past, in the mean time, and syne when the new minister came he would please himself," he ended, with another of his deferential little chuckles.

I mentally resolved to restore Mr. Hill's cross on the first fitting opportunity; and having learnt all that I wished to know from Rae, I begged him not to wait, saying I would keep the vestry key in future myself. I wished for a little quiet time in the church before leaving it; and it was restful and soothing, after the long journey and the events of the day, to say the

Evening Office there alone in the quiet little empty sanctuary. I tried to put away all doubting thoughts and any gloomy prognostications which Mr. Rae's words might have called up, and to look forward to my new sphere of work with faith and hope and trustfulness. Besides, no amount of gloomy prognostications then could have obscured the fact that I had at last been given the realization of my earnest wish and of not a few prayers; so it was with a sanguine and I hope a thankful heart, though with rather a tired body, that I at length pocketed the key of St. Peter's, and sought my night's repose at the Glenforth Arms Hotel.

## CHAPTER II.

THE sun was shining brightly when I awoke. Accustomed for years to be of necessity an early riser, I did not feel by any means disposed to depart from my ordinary habit; so I rose betimes, and went out for a whiff of fresh air and a look round me before breakfast.

Such air as it is! I have alluded to its effect on first arrival; and now, in the freshness of morning, the feeling is exhilarating beyond description. Cold and keen it certainly feels to one just arrived from the south; but the rays of the sun are already powerful, for he has been up many hours.

I walked as quickly as I could to the outskirts of the town, where the houses did not so much obstruct the view. It is a cheerful though not a beautiful district. Much of it is very flat and bare, laid out like a map in wide fields of varying colours, according to their crops. I can just trace the course of the Ruthie, which gives its name to the place—a placid, slow-flowing stream, with flat green banks and curious curvings and windings, losing itself at length in the Glenforth woods,



where it is merged in a larger river. In the distance are tracts of rising ground, chiefly under cultivation ; but the real feature of the country is the great range of the Cairnbannock hill, which stretches away behind the town to the north-west, in purple heights with rocky summits—a veritable mountain in the eyes of such a Southron as myself. I wish that my homefolk could see it now, with the fleeting cloud-shadows and bright lights, and—yes, it is, actually, that gleaming white spot—a little forgotten patch of winter snow in the hollow ! I promise myself a ramble there some day soon as I walk home, with a much sharpened appetite, to breakfast.

That over, I resolve to give the forenoon to my sermon ; but just as I have sat down a letter is brought in—a note rather, for it has never been posted—addressed to the Reverend Robert Wingate : which being my proper designation, I open and read :

*“ Laverock Cottage, Ruthieston,  
“ 25th May.*

• “ MY DEAR SIR,

“ A sharp attack of lumbago, which keeps me a prisoner to the house, prevents my having the pleasure of calling upon you at once, as I should have wished to do, both in consideration of the relation in which I stand to St. Peter’s congregation, and also from motives of courtesy, to welcome you to our midst. I am an attached adherent of our Protestant Church, and am prepared to offer my cordial support to one who, I

doubt not, will maintain her services in their due simplicity and solemnity, and live in peace and goodwill with his Christian brethren around him. I shall be gratified if you will waive ceremony, and call upon me this afternoon, at any hour convenient to yourself, when I shall be most happy to make your acquaintance.

"I am, dear Sir,

"Yours faithfully,

"THOMAS GLEN."

I own that the perusal of this note, coupled with the hints thrown out by Mr. Rae, led me to think that my lay representative might not be entirely congenial. However, the poor man evidently intended to be civil, and I made up my mind to call upon him as early as I could in the afternoon. Having despatched my morning's work and my luncheon, I set forth again; and, after a few inquiries by the way, succeeded in finding Laverock Cottage—a neat, detached villa in a little garden on the outskirts of the town. A trim servant-maid admitted me, and I was ushered into a pretty little drawing-room, and the presence of Major Glen and his two daughters. He was a striking, if not a fine-looking, elderly man, with white hair, moustache and beard, keen dark eyes, aquiline nose, and a commanding presence. The young ladies were both dark-haired and dark-eyed, the taller of the two having a good deal of resemblance to her father. The

Major rose and received me with somewhat formal courtesy.

"How do you do, Mr. Wingate? You are most courteous in so promptly replying in person to my note of excuse. Allow me to present you to my daughters—Miss Glen, Miss May Glen. Pray be seated."

I took a chair, quite overwhelmed with so much politeness.

"It gives me great pleasure," continued the Major, in rather pompous tones, "to welcome you to Ruthieston, and in doing so, to welcome once more a resident minister to our little flock. I assure you we have been most unfortunately situated for a good while past—at first by a most unsuitable appointment (it grieves me to say so, for he was a most well-intentioned young man), and since his removal, by such very uncertain and varying ministrations, that our flock has been a good deal scattered in consequence. May I ask if this is your first visit to Scotland?"

I replied that it was.

"I may express a hope that you will find the climate of our northern land as healthful as I have always done. You are strong, Mr. Wingate?"

"Yes, I am thankful to say I am."

"You appear so. Health and strength are great blessings—tempered with discretion. You are not new to your duties, I know."

"I have been working for four years in a large parish, and under most able direction, I believe."

"That is well. I trust you are not infected—excuse my saying so—with the sad errors and popery so grievously undermining the Church of England."

I assured him, most truthfully, that I had no sympathy whatever with popery.

"I am glad to hear you say so. In these days one had need to walk warily indeed. The state of the Church in England is such as to cause the gravest anxiety to thinking minds."

Perhaps I agreed with him, though not quite as he would have taken it. I was feeling a little impatient of the style of his conversation, a little aggrieved that I should have travelled four hundred miles only to listen to such platitudes on popery as I could hear at any time from any semi-dissenting tradesman in England. Perhaps my frame of mind showed itself in the futility of my next remark :

"I suppose there are a great many Presbyterians among the townspeople here ?"

"Yes, Mr. Wingate, there are. And a more intelligent, godly-living body of Christians I think you will hardly find in any town. They will never interfere with you, and I should recommend you not to interfere with them—I mean on religious grounds—for you will certainly do yourself no good, and your position harm thereby. One of the greatest mistakes your predecessor, Mr. Hill, made was in his attitude towards his Presbyterian brethren."

"What was his attitude towards them ?"

"Hostility, sir—most bigoted hostility!" replied the old gentleman. "Both in and out of the pulpit his language and demeanour were most un-Christian, and his sermons especially. You recollect, Nellie" (to his daughter), "the peroration on last Christmas Day—most indefensible, sir! He conducted himself too in a very uncourteous, unbrotherly way to Dr. Roger, our Established clergyman—a man, Mr. Wingate, whom it is a privilege to know, and whose learning and piety are unquestioned. I suppose you have not yet met Dr. Roger? No. Well, of course he will call on you soon, and if you will accept my simple hospitality one day, I shall be delighted to give you the opportunity of becoming better acquainted. I hope you will, indeed I may be allowed to advise you, as a stranger to Scotland, to live in harmony with those men who differ from you."

"I hope to do so," I said. "My father has worked in one parish for thirty-five years, and has won the love of all his flock, and the respect even of outsiders."

"I am delighted to hear it. But why the uncharitable word 'outsiders'? Believe me, Mr. Wingate, no souls are won by the use of exclusive terms. That was Mr. Hill's specialty. And towards the Free Church his behaviour was even worse! I'll tell you an instance," the Major went on, warming with his subject. "Lord Glenforth had a friend, an English clergyman, staying with him. You have doubtless heard of Lord Glenforth—a most excellent young man, and true Christian, though I do not agree with him in every-

thing. Well, this clergyman, who is rather a noted preacher, was to preach one Sunday in our little chapel; he was also asked to preach in the Free Church in the evening of the same day. This came to Mr. Hill's knowledge, and—will you credit it?—he actually, in the most illiberal spirit, refused, positively refused, in that case, to allow the visitor to occupy his pulpit! It made a most unpleasant feeling, I assure you, and would have done so still more had not Lord Glenforth, in a truly Christian temper, promised to preach in the Free Kirk himself, so that neither party might be disappointed."

"Lord Glenforth preach himself!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, sir—himself. I told you I do not go with him in everything, and I do not as a rule approve of those who have not made the Church their profession taking the office of preachers; but Lord Glenforth is a born evangelist, and does undoubted good. But you will see, from what I have told you, that Mr. Hill's conduct was far from right."

I had not the slightest wish to enter into a discussion with the Major; yet I should have felt almost hypocritical if I had not given some expression of my opinion, so I said:

"It must have been a very unpleasant position for Mr. Hill, and one in which I sincerely trust I may never be placed; but if I were"—I felt the three pairs of dark eyes fixed on me searchingly—"if I were, I hope I should act up to what I believed my duty, as conscientiously, at least, as my predecessor."

A glance quick as lightning was exchanged between the young ladies, and the Major said :

"I hope, if you were, sir, that you would have more enlightened views of your duty, at all events."

To fill up a rather awkward pause I turned to Miss Glen, saying that I believed she was kind enough to act as organist.

"My daughters have done so hitherto," said their father for them, with a look out of his hawk-like eyes as if to say that their continuing to do so depended on my behaviour. "Perhaps, May, my dear, you had better show Mr. Wingate what hymns you have selected."

Miss May put a paper before me.

"Those are what I have practised ; but, of course, if you wish any change—"

"And I hope you will not be *very* hard upon us !" said Miss Glen, in a tone that was both laughing and lachrymose. "Mr. Hill was so *tiresome* about music ; always wanting tunes that nobody could sing, and abusing the singing."

"You will see if you think we do so very badly," said her sister, with an ingenuous smile at me. "Of course, it is quite *congregational* singing ; but there are one or two very sweet voices, only you cannot quite depend on their always being there."

I thanked Miss Glen for her list of hymns, and then stood up to go, feeling that the visit had lasted long enough. Major Glen shook hands with me kindly,

saying he hoped I should have an attentive congregation to-morrow. "And if I am not amongst them you will conclude that infirmity, not unwillingness, prevents me," he added, "for I am naturally anxious to hear your first sermon. We like the old-fashioned sort of sermon, you know. Mr. Hill preached for about twenty minutes: that doesn't suit our people at all. They like to get something worth coming for! Well, good-bye, Mr. Wingate, and success to you!"

I left, feeling not particularly enlivened by my visit, and wondering if many of my flock shared the opinions of Major Glen. From the tone of his conversation I should take him to be three-quarters Presbyterian, for he spoke of "our Established clergyman" with quite as much or more warmth than of his own (so-called) minister. The continual recapitulation of poor Mr. Hill's offences, too, depressed me, feeling sure as I did that I should in most points sympathize with him. I must find out on whom besides I have to call. I have not learnt any names yet, except this preaching lord's, and the Mr. Lindsay whom Rae mentioned, and Dr. Roger.

But if I did know I should not have time to seek them out to-day, for I have to see about getting my traps over to Miss Skinner's; and I want to put some finishing touches to my sermons also.

By five o'clock my arrangements were made, and I took possession of my new lodging with a certain satisfaction.



The good folks have made the parlour very clean and decent for me, and have removed every vestige of Mr. Macaldowie except his atmosphere. Only time, and a long course of thorough draughts, will remove that. Being a non-smoker myself, I am perhaps more sensitive to the habits of others in that respect, though I hope I am not fastidious. The room is a comfortable one: there are muslin curtains to the window, besides brown stuff ones, and a Venetian blind—drawn, of course, though the sun has long left this side and is shining in at the north window of my bedroom, as he knows how to do up to a late hour in these latitudes. There is a good horsehair sofa with a knitted cover, admirably adapted for a dust-trap: a chiffonier with no keys, and shelves of a most disappointingly retreating construction: also a bell-glass covering some feather flowers: some pictures on the walls (prints of the ordinary lodging-house type); and a central “gasalier.” There is also a good easy-chair, and a cosy little fireplace, now much ornamented with many-coloured silver paper. Altogether I feel a compunction in having deprived poor Mr. Macaldowie—especially if he is an invalid—of his parlour. If he is a Churchman, and a decent sort of person, I must cultivate him, and ask him to come and sit with me sometimes; perhaps he might even share my parlour, using it when I am out, by a sort of “Box and Cox” arrangement. Hullo! what is this card on the mantel-piece?

"J. MACALDOWIE AND SON,  
*Coal and Coke Merchants.*

Large quantities of Household, Great Splint, Steam and Gas

Coal and Coke, always in stock at the yard.

Lowest current prices. Orders promptly attended to.

*Branch Office:—RUTHUESTON RAILWAY STATION."*

Is this a solution of the mystery? I think it is almost a greater puzzle; for how "Macaldowie and Son" can be compressed into the one small apartment on my landing to eat, drink, smoke, and sleep in, is more than I can fathom. Perhaps it is only "Son." Well, I shall find out in good time. At any rate he has an eye to business, leaving his card behind him; and looks forward to the day when I shall be a householder.

The plain young woman brought me my tea at six o'clock—a not untempting meal, with good country bread, butter, and milk, a pot of Dundee marmalade, and some sort of jelly in a glass. How Charlotte would laugh if she saw all my luxuries! I have a particular weakness for marmalade, and this is particularly good. From the voices and sounds below I conjecture that Mr. Macaldowie is taking *his* tea with the ladies.

The long light evenings here are delightful—day-light even now till past nine o'clock. I must make use of *this* evening for a letter home; so for the present no more note-book, or speculations about my neighbours.

## CHAPTER III.

I SUPPOSE in time I shall become accustomed to sleeping in a wall cupboard with a lean-to side. At present I cannot say I find it an improvement on the ordinary bedstead. Perhaps it was answerable for the very curious dream I had, namely, that Major Glen had written to tell me that Lord Glenforth had kindly offered to preach for me that morning. I was beating my brains for a way out of the difficulty when I awoke, very thankful to find it a dream after all.

A beautiful Sabbath quiet seemed to reign in the house long after I was up and dressed. I have since found out that it is a common custom with the good folks here to take an hour's grace or so on Sunday morning; which Miss Skinner's household observed rigidly. I cannot say for my fellow-lodger. I am certain he lighted his pipe at an early hour; whether he was up or not I do not care to guess. At last I was favoured with some hot water, and subsequently with my breakfast.

I had plenty of time to collect myself before church,

and I went down to it fully three quarters of an hour before the time for service. Eleven forty-five is a sufficiently late hour to begin to "shake off dull sloth" (I hope Miss Glen does not often choose that hymn, though she has done so this time). Rae told me, when I remarked on the lateness of the hour, that it was to suit the *Scotch* churches; and when I said I did not see the necessity, he explained that a good many of our congregation coming from a distance, brought their coachmen or other servants, who thus could attend their own places of worship.

Rae rings the bell for about ten minutes, at the end of which, time being up, I vest and go into church. It is pretty well filled, and by a very well-dressed congregation. All the faces are strange to me except the Miss Glens, who occupy the harmonium corner together. Miss May plays, her elder sister hovering over her, apparently to turn her leaves, draw her stops, and support her generally. Their father is not present. In the course of the service my eye is caught by one other face which I have seen before—my Free Kirk friend who showed me the way from the station, and to whom I owe my present lodging, though I have not seen him since that first evening. I have heard that Presbyterians not unfrequently come to our church from curiosity.

I do not think there was anything noteworthy in my first service. The most noteworthy fact to me was the great want of response in the congregation: nothing

but a low murmur, which was uncomfortably suggestive of "reading prayers" in a drawing-room. The singing was not unmusical of its kind ; as Miss Glen said, there were some "sweet voices" here and there, but as to pointing and expression, every one did what was right in his or her (principally "her") own eyes.

After service I did not hasten out, feeling a not unnatural shyness at confronting the talkative assembly in the churchyard ; but as I had finished counting the slender contents of the offertory bag with Rae, a knock at the vestry door was followed by the appearance of two gentlemen, one tall and dark, the other short and fair, both middle-aged. They introduced themselves to me as Mr. Lindsay and Captain Ferguson—the latter being the principal spokesman, a genial, hearty fellow, who proves to be a sailor. His companion is certainly the "retiring gentleman" Rae called him, but something about him altogether attracted me. Both gentlemen were very kind and cordial, expressing their hopes that I was comfortably lodged, would like the place, &c., and that I would come and see them and make acquaintance with their families. Their said families had in the mean time gathered about their several equipages ; but as I was walking down the path two ladies came up, one saying to Captain Ferguson, "Will you introduce me?" and he accordingly presented me to Mrs. Rennie. A middle-aged, energetic-looking person, with a pleasant face and an impulsive manner, she began at once with many inquiries as to my welfare ;

and, assuring me that she lived very near me, begged I would come and see her to-morrow. I was then at the gate presented to several ladies in the carriages, but there was little time for more than a bow to each, and I was allowed to walk home quietly.

The Presbyterian churches were just "coming out," and at the door of my lodging I encountered Miss Skinner and her niece in their Sunday bravery; but of my fellow-lodger I have as yet seen nothing. I wonder if he "sat under me" to-day!

I took a long rambling walk upon the skirts of Cairnbannock between services. It was a lovely afternoon, and I sat for a long time looking over the broad sunny expanse of map-like country (I had climbed high enough to see a good way), and musing of many things which I need not set down here.

Five o'clock found me again in St. Peter's, but with a much reduced congregation, for the carriage folk do not come twice. A good many outsiders (*pace* Major Glen) fill up their seats, I fancy; and there is positively that comely young Free Kirker again, looking up at me in the most scrutinizing way from time to time, and behaving really more devoutly than many Churchmen. I must find out who he is.

Mrs. Rennie was at church again. She waited and waylaid me, this time by herself, in the churchyard, with a most hospitable and pressing invitation.

"Would you take a quiet lunch with me on Tuesday (I am engaged to-morrow, I recollected), at half-past

one? and after lunch I am going to make a few calls on our neighbours, and if you would accept a seat in my little pony-carriage—I dare say you would wish to be calling on some of the influential members of your flock soon?—I should be so glad if you would accompany me; for really the Fergusons, and the Lindsays, and Pitcrichie Castle, are quite beyond a walk.”

It was a really kind and thoughtful offer, for I had already begun to consider ways and means to reach my far-off friends; and besides, Mrs. Rennie could tell me a little who they were beforehand, and I did not feel afraid to ask her; so I gratefully accepted.

“What an excellent sermon you gave us! forgive my saying so,” Mrs. Rennie went on. “I did so wish Major Glen had been there to hear it; between ourselves,” &c., &c., &c., from which I escaped as soon as I could.

I did not quite see the point of her last remarks too. My sermon had been a most ordinary one, not in any way directed “at” Major Glen had he been present. I had been warned, by wiser than he, before I came to Scotland, not to rush into controversy before I had thoroughly realized my position: that I must look at Presbyterianism as it actually was, the established and acknowledged religion of the majority, not a mere form of dissent. Theologically, of course, Presbyterians and English schismatics occupy much the same position; but it would never do for me to begin my work as a crusade, as if I were the first missionary who had ever preached the Catholic

faith in Scotland. In short, I had been advised that the weapons of my warfare were to be example rather than precept, witness rather than controversy; and that I was more likely to benefit my own cause and outsiders by emphatically "minding my own business."

I was old enough to value the advice, though I had not been without my dreams. In fancy my church was to be a little gem, as perfect as I could make it: the services frequent and attractive, the ritual as full as circumstances allowed. If I were not to drive, I was to entice the wandering sheep into the fold. Others I knew had done so. Yet somehow my first Sunday's experience had blotted out my fair dreams. After the plain, dull, hopelessly *respectable* order of the service, the vague singing, the Miss Glens' tame, school-girl performance, and Mrs. Rennie's well-meant but tiresome platitudes, I seemed to have descended from romance to very prosaic reality, on which I was likely to make but little palpable impression.

But still, had I not attracted one "outsider" to the church? Again and again that attentive young face rose up before my mind's vision, with the keen, scrutinizing eyes, as if he were weighing my words, and the manner "more devout than many Churchmen," I said to myself. The Scotch are naturally a grave, devout people, I think. At any rate I feel sure there is material to work on there; and I went to bed more determined than ever to look up this stranger, even at the risk of being set down as an ardent proselytizer.



## CHAPTER IV.

I HAD by no means lost my determination next day. But charity begins at home, as I recollected ; and there was poor Mr. Macaldowie, presumably one of my flock, in the very next room—all night at least, for I had heard him go out early in the morning. I must get at him somehow to-day ; so during the forenoon I went down-stairs and into the Post Office, and asked Miss Skinner when he was likely to be at home.

“Likely not before evening,” she answered ; “he mostly stops at his office all day. The yard is just oot by the railway station ; ye’ll see the name upo’ the door, if ye was wantin’ to get him.”

It seemed almost absurd to go even so far to call on a person who slept beneath the same roof : at the same time there was an awkwardness in invading the poor man’s one little apartment, especially feeling that I had deprived him of his parlour. So I concluded to walk down to his place of business, congratulating myself on the idea that my unknown guide

having been picked up in those parts, I might also possibly come across him so again.

I could not mistake the yard: it was on one side of the station buildings, and not far from my church either; and I very soon saw "J. Macaldowie and Son" above the entry to the warehouse. There was a small office attached to it, at the door of which stood a lad, of whom I inquired if I could see Mr. Macaldowie.

"He's not in the noo. Ye can leave any orders with me."

"I wished to call upon him; will you let him know?"

"That's Mr. Macaldowie coming now," said the boy for all answer, looking up the road. And turning in the direction of his glance, I faced—my supposed Free Kirk critic.

I take it that my countenance must have expressed something of my surprise, for there was a little amusement in his, as he took off his hat to me civilly.

"Mr. Macaldowie, I believe?" I said

"Yes, I am Mr. Macaldowie—junior," he added modestly.

"I need hardly introduce myself, as we are *very* near neighbours," I said; "but having failed to find you at home, I was directed here, so I came to call upon you."

"Thank you, sir. Will you walk in and sit down?"

And turning the office-boy unceremoniously out, Mr. Macaldowie, junior, admitted me into his sanctum.

"So we are not entirely strangers," I said, "though I was quite unaware that it was my guide who was my fellow-lodger. I am afraid I have deprived you of your sitting-room."

"Not at all, sir," he replied. "I only occupied the room just because it was vacant, on the understanding that Miss Skinner was to have it at any time. Besides, I live, virtually, down here; and for the rest, Miss Skinner is very obliging. I hope you find the rooms pretty comfortable?"

I was soon chatting away freely with this young fellow, who, in point of fact, was very agreeable and intelligent. I said presently, "Do you know, I took you to be a Free Kirker," and he asked in a very *naïve* and child-like manner, "Why?" which almost posed me. I said, "Partly because you called our church the 'chapel.'"

"Did I? Well, it is a way we have here. You see the country people all speak of their own as the church."

"So we must acknowledge ourselves to be dissenters!" I said, laughing. "My English ears, you must remember, don't like the sound of that 'chapel.'"

"Oh yes, I know. I have lived in London. You have plenty of chapels thereabouts."

"And have you always belonged to the Church?"

"Yes, sir, always; my father also. He is a very

strong Churchman. He has been for many years churchwarden to Mr. Newton, in town."

I knew Mr. Newton by name and repute sufficiently to know that his churchwarden, if of his choosing, must be a "strong Churchman." (My own churchwardens, by the way, are non-resident, I had found out from Rae, but were originally elected to hold office for life, which I cannot consider a happy arrangement.)

"Your father does not live out here, then?"

"No, sir. He lives in town, where our principal house is. I am his partner, and look after the branch business here."

After a little more conversation I found myself led into telling him of Rae's curious mistake, by which I had missed discovering his identity sooner. He laughed very much at that.

"I had a very sore throat, sir, some while ago; in fact I was really very ill for a short time. I suppose he was referring to that."

"You took some interest in the singing while Mr. Hill was here, I understand."

"Oh, well," he replied, modestly, "it was not very much that I could do; but Mr. Hill was trying a few voices for a choir, and there were not many to help him. But we didn't come much speed with it; and then Mr. Hill was obliged to resign."

"Mr. Hill was not very popular here, by what I have heard, was he?"

"Perhaps not." There was a tone about the young man's answer as if he did not altogether relish my question. "I shall not say but I was very sorry when he left. He was exceedingly kind to me."

"Ah! How long was he here?"

"Three years. I only knew him for two, for I was not here when he came. But ever since I first stopped out here he was so kind."

"It was a pity he could not remain," I said. "I understand he made several improvements on the former order of things."

"Indeed he did, sir, and he would have done much more could he have stopped. But there were one or two here—it is not for me to mention names—who seemed determined to *drive* him away; though he would not have stood another winter here, whatever. He suffered very much from his chest; I think his lungs were affected; and he just went away back to his mother in England, to die, I would be afraid," Mr. Macaldowie ended, in a tone of such quiet, unaffected sadness that I could see it was a case of strong personal attachment with him. I felt the more drawn towards my new friend, the first person I had met here who had not, directly or indirectly, spoken disparagingly of poor Mr. Hill.

"Well," I said, in a tone meant to be cheering, "I must do my best to carry out the reforms which he would have made—I think there is room for a few here; and, since you helped Mr. Hill, I hope I may

look for some help from you sometimes, in Church matters."

"Thank you, sir ; I shall be very happy to be of any use to you that I can, though I fear it will not be much that I can do."

"The will is everything," I answered. "And now I must not take up your time further, for there is some one at the door. You must come to my room some evening soon and have a talk ;" and so with a hearty hand-shake we parted.

I felt altogether quite inspirited by my interview. I do like a young man who is friendly and hearty, and ready to enter into Church matters. There are one or two in my father's parish who are perfectly invaluable, and from whom I felt sadly the parting when I left. This young Macaldowie is a staunch Churchman and no mistake, and his friendship for my predecessor augurs well for his support of me. If I may only be a worthy successor of this poor hard-working, persecuted and afflicted Mr. Hill !

I did not see anything more of my new friend that evening, or indeed next morning. He is so quiet, besides, that I should never guess there was another man in the house.

Tuesday : a fine, clear day, so I must keep my appointment with Mrs. Rennie. If it were not for the visiting, and facing strangers, which I hate, I should greatly enjoy a drive to see the country ; but in any case I dare say it will be very pleasant.

Mrs. Rennie's house is called the Lilacs—quite a Cockney name. It is in the town, but stands by itself, with a little square of flower-garden in front, and a few shrubs inside the wire fence.

In the drawing-room—a really pretty little apartment, fragrant with flowers—I found Mrs. Rennie sitting alone, and she received me most cordially.

“I am so glad to see you, Mr. Wingate, and so good of you to come so punctually; but I *know* you are punctual; I found that out on Sunday. Such a comfort! for poor dear Mr. Hill, his great weakness was uncertainty in the time. You never knew when you set out for church whether you would have to wait a quarter of an hour or find him begun. Now, do find a chair; here—you will be away from the draught at the window. Ah! you smile; you don't mind draughts! I am so used to poor dear Mr. Hill, and his cough—so distressing it was sometimes. Do you know, when I heard you were coming I was so thankful! I said to Selina, my Selina, my young friend, you *knôw*, ‘Now I am *sure* we shall have an energetic clergyman’—your father's name, you know, so well known,” &c., &c., &c. I sat unable till then to get in a word, till she paused quite breathless at, “Of course I knew your father's name—the Rev. B. C. Wingate.”

“That is my father's name,” I said.

“I knew him by his writings, of course; I have not the pleasure of a personal acquaintance. But we were both, Selina and I, quite delighted. I must tell you

about my Selina ; I am not sure if I presented you to her on Sunday. People often call her my niece, and indeed she is more like a niece to me, though her father was only a very distant connection of mine. *I* am English, you know, like you ; but I lived so long in the North with my dear husband that I cannot leave it now. And then our dear Scottish Church—I love it so much ! Rennie of Rennieshaugh—you must know the name—was my dear husband's elder brother ; but he died—they both died within a few months of each other, and the place is gone to a very distant branch. I never go there now, and I have left that part, but I do like Ruthieston. Well, but I have wandered away from poor Selina. It is rather a sad story. Her mother died when she was quite a child : her father was a clever artist, quite a genius, but somehow he never was successful, and he got into difficulties, and died leaving this poor girl and one sister quite unprovided for. Some friends assisted to place them at a school, to finish their education, and the younger sister has gone out as a governess. Selina tried it also, but her health could not stand the teaching and worry, and so I asked her to try staying with me as companion, for I am very lonely now ; and really I think this air has been the saving of her. It is a pleasant arrangement for us both, only I feel she is a little thrown away, for she is very clever. Such an ardent Churchwoman too ; and really I hope you will be able to find some Church work for her. She plays very nicely, and would be very glad to play



in church, but the Miss Glens, you see, keep that all to themselves. And she can decorate too, and paint, and do Church embroidery; for she lived for a year in a clergyman's family, and they were most excellent people—taught her so much that has been a comfort to her; so that really I hope—”

What Mrs. Rennie hoped was (fortunately or otherwise) lost to me by the opening of the door, at which entered a young lady who appeared as though she might have just stepped out of one of Burne Jones's pictures. She was unusually tall—nearly six feet high, I should guess—and very slender, and was clad in a close-fitting robe of dark green, with some kind of a silver girdle at the waist, and a silver arrow stuck sideways at her throat. Her hair was of the colour of tow, and I can only describe it as “towzled.” Her face was pale, so were her eyes, and her eyelashes were as light as her hair. I suppose her features were what would be described as interesting: I cannot say they interested me.

“Mr. Wingate—Miss Hall,” said Mrs. Rennie, and immediately continued, “I was just telling Mr. Wingate I hoped he would find some Church work for you, Selina; you have been so anxious to have some.”

“There is very little scope for Church work here,” said Selina, in a languid drawl; “don't you think so, Mr. Wingate?”

I replied that I had not been here long enough to judge.

"Everything is so cold and lifeless," she said, in the same tone of determined hopelessness, and she seated herself and took up a little piece of embroidery work, in an attitude which I suppose was intended to be æsthetic.

Luncheon was announced almost immediately. I do not think anything noteworthy occurred thereat. Mrs. Rennie sat at the head of the table, and talked for us all; and I heard a good deal more of poor dear Mr. Hill, and what he would not eat, and what she used to try and persuade him to eat, and so forth. Miss Hall sat opposite, and made a good luncheon, in spite of her delicate looks.

Then the ladies went to prepare for the drive, and shortly after the pony carriage came round. It was a small basket phaeton. Miss Hall assumed the reins, Mrs. Rennie sat beside her, and I was bestowed opposite. We had no servant with us.

"My little pony is very quiet," Mrs. Rennie said, "and Selina is a good charioteer. I think we will take Pitcrichie Castle first, Selina dear."

I asked who lived at Pitcrichie Castle.

"Mrs. Reid Douglas and her family," Mrs. Rennie replied. "Strictly speaking, Mr. Wingate, she is not one of your congregation; she belongs to the Established Church. But her son (who is a minor) very often comes to us in his holidays, and one or other of his sisters, and they often have English visitors, and you ought to know them. The boy will have the property,

you know ; and I shouldn't wonder if he made a good Churchman. He is a nice fellow, and so are his sisters ; dear girls, aren't they, Selina ? ”

I asked presently if Lord Glenforth stayed much at his place.

“ Yes ; in the summer and autumn usually. You have heard of him, no doubt ? Eccentric young man, very, but *so* good, poor fellow, in his way. I really always have a strong pity for people who have that great turn for preaching, and whose circumstances have shut them out from the lawful exercise of it.”

I must confess that I never had any sympathy for a layman who is so fond of hearing himself that he rushes in where ordained pastors often “ fear to tread ” ; so I said I did not agree with Mrs. Rennie.

“ And there are so many spheres of useful Church work open to a layman, without going beyond his province,” said Miss Hall.

“ I quite agree with you,” I said.

“ Ah ! you are quite of Mr. Hill's view,” said Mrs. Rennie ; “ and after all, of course it *is* the right one, looked at from the highest point. But poor dear Mr. Hill was so very unconciliatory, so uncompromising. I think that was one hindrance to his success here ; at least, you know, people did *not* care for him, and yet he was so good, so earnest, so well-meaning, so—”

I felt really that if I heard much more of poor dear Mr. Hill—condemnation veiled under compassion is more provoking than downright censure—I should lose

my temper; and was thankful when Mrs. Rennie's stream of eloquence was diverted by our passing a cheery-looking dark-eyed little man on horseback, whom both the ladies saluted cordially as he trotted by us.

"You know him, Mr. Wingate? No? Our medical man—Dr. Grassick. A most clever doctor too, and such a kind, cheerful person. I hope you will not have occasion yourself to test his skill, but I am sure you will like him in society."

"Not a Churchman, is he?"

"Ah, no, poor fellow. Free—Free; so many Free Church here; but a good Christian as ever lived. And I am sure his kindness and attention to poor dear Mr. Hill I can never forget: they were great friends.

"By the by, Mr. Wingate, you have a very good Churchman living under your roof; I suppose you have found that out?"

I replied that I had. And, being just opposite, I could not help observing that the face of the young lady driving had become suffused with too deep a tint for Burne Jones. The pony just then made an awkward stumble, which may have disturbed her nerves; at any rate I had no reason—certainly no business—to connect it with the good Churchman under my roof.

I noticed that the pony got two or three sharp cuts—ladies' cuts always are sharp, I think—for stumbling. (I suppose this is right, as I know good drivers do it;

but it always seemed to me rather hard lines to punish a poor beast for a stumble.) Mrs. Rennie took up the thread again.

“You will find him very useful, I don’t doubt. He and Mr. Hill used to go about like brothers, didn’t they, Selina? And he is a very superior young man too, and will have extensive means some day. His father is quite a character—very rich, a large merchant and ship-owner—and this is the only son.”

We began to ascend a steep hill where the ground rose towards Cairnbannock; and I proposed to get out and walk, as much for my own good as for the pony’s, feeling cramped and tired with sitting. Then we turned into a road shaded by fir trees, of which the scent and the shade were alike grateful.

## CHAPTER V.

"THERE is Pitcrichie Castle," said Mrs. Rennie, as a building appeared in sight behind the trees. "I hope we shall find them at homè, for Mrs. Reid Douglas is very kind and hospitable, and Ina is such a sweet girl."

I have a great dislike to the word "sweet" applied to persons, and accordingly I prepared myself for something especially "gushing" and tiresome. We stopped at the door of the house, a handsome building, really an old castle, and were admitted into the cool, pleasant drawing-room, looking out on green fields with fine trees. A young lady was its only occupant when we went in. And if a slight graceful figure, a manner at once modest and self-possessed, and a face not strictly beautiful, but full of good temper and gentleness, can be described as "sweet," certainly Ina Reid Douglas deserved the adjective.

She received us kindly, then went and called her mother, with whom she returned. Mrs. Reid Douglas was a quiet, middle-aged widow lady, with a decidedly

Scotch accent, but I preferred her manner to Mrs. Rennie's. And when her daughter Ina sat down and devoted herself in the civilest manner possible to Selina Hall, notwithstanding the latter's cool, inanimate replies, I thought the contrast between the younger ladies very striking. During this visit, too, not a word was said of Mr. Hill : of course that might have been because the family were not interested in the church. Still it was a relief to me, who was quite sick of my poor predecessor's name.

Mrs. Rennie said something to me about the view, upon which Mrs. Douglas desired her daughter to show us the front garden. I had no idea we had climbed so high, for the outlook was most extensive, and here was the smoke of Ruthieston rising far below the level of the ground on which the castle stood. Behind it, again, the crests of Cairnbannock towered high and blue against the sky, and the air was delightfully fresh and invigorating.

"I suppose you have never been to the top of Cairnbannock, Miss Douglas?" I said.

"Oh yes, often," she replied, with a little laugh. "My brother and I go nearly every summer. I think the Fergusons are to get up a picnic there next week."

Mrs. Rennie, who with Mrs. Douglas had followed us out of doors, caught up the idea of the picnic eagerly, especially insisting that it would be a delightful way for me to see the country; and after a little more desultory talk we left.

Our next visit was to be to the Fergusons, from whom Mrs. Rennie anxiously hoped to hear all about the picnic. To reach their abode we must partly descend the hill, and drive a good way along the open road.

"So delightful a picnic would be if the weather were fine," Mrs. Rennie said. "I am sure you are longing to get up the hill; I see it in your face. So nice it is to be strong and a good walker! Poor Mr. Hill went to the nearest point once with Mr. Macaldowie."

"And he said he thought he should never have got him home again," said Selina. "He told me so himself."

"Ah, yes, so foolish; but young men—and Mr. Hill was no more fit to take care of himself than a baby."

"And Mr. Macaldowie is so *intensely* strong," lisped Selina, "he would never think of being tired."

Dalquhain is the name of Captain Ferguson's abode. He is a tenant, I am told, not a proprietor; but is looked on almost as a laird by virtue of a long lease.

Here we find a merry party of young men and maidens in the midst of lawn-tennis. Our visit is paid chiefly in the garden. Mrs. Ferguson is a handsome, active materfamilias, as genial as her husband. I am introduced to various sons and daughters, but really I can't make out any of their names. We are pressed to take tea; and much lively chatter goes on, in the midst of which the picnic party is made up for next Saturday, and I receive a cordial invitation to join. After tea we once more resume our seats



behind the patient pony, who has been put up for half-an-hour, so I hope is refreshed, for we have to go three-quarters of a mile further to the Lindsays.

They are out. I am disappointed at this, as I think I shall like Mr. Lindsay. Several nice children are playing in the garden, and a handsome, well-mannered boy, about eight years old, comes up on being beckoned by Mrs. Rennie.

"Papa and mamma are gone to town for the day," he says; and then, with a compassionate glance, "How hot the pony is! Won't you rest a little?"

"Thank you, my dear, but we have rested, and I fear we must push on home," and on accordingly we did push.

"Now, Mr. Wingate, I have one more call to make, *very* near home, and I want you to come with me. It is to the manse. I know it is for Dr. Roger to call on you first, but you will not stand on ceremony I am sure, and I know you will like the old people."

I agreed. The Established manse is at the entrance, almost, of Ruthieston from the Pitcrichie side. Here, for whatever reason, Selina elected to remain in the carriage, saying—

"You two will be quite enough for the old people: I'll stay with the pony."

We did not find Dr. Roger in, but I was, I confess, quite charmed with old Mrs. Roger. Quite a character she is, no doubt; an old Scotch minister's lady of the old school, but a perfect lady in all

respects, and so courteous and kind, regretting her doctor's absence.

"But 'deed I think he's away to call for ye this afternoon, Mr. Wingate," she said, "and he'll be so disappointed."

I felt that I should be disappointed too, and said so. But I shall call again, I hope, by myself. I shall really enjoy a chat with the motherly old lady; and where Mrs. Rennie is, the experience of to-day shows that no one else can get in a word.

Selina was looking rather animated when we re-joined her, and presently began—

"Think how stupid of those Fergusons arranging their picnic the day of the cricket match."

"Cricket match!" I said, pricking up my ears like the great schoolboy I fear I still am in many ways.

"Yes," said Miss Hall. "The Ruthieston eleven are to play the North Star men from town."

"When did you recollect that, dear?"

"I heard just now," responded Selina, with a look under her white eyelashes at her friend.

"Ah. Are you fond of cricket, Mr. Wingate?"

"Indeed I am, Mrs. Rennie."

"Well, I don't suppose our club is anything very wonderful—just the townspeople, you know; but Selina is very fond of seeing a match, and when there is a good one she generally drives me round that way."

"Where do they play?"

"At the market-stance, the green at the other end of the town. What time is the match, Selina? do you know?"

"About four, but they are not quite sure."

"How 'unlucky! We shall be just in the midst of the picnic."

"*You* will. I would not miss this match on any account," said Selina in a *nonchalant* tone, which, however, expressed determination.

We had now reached the end of High Street, so I begged Mrs. Rennie to let me get out, and to accept my best thanks for so pleasant a drive and the opportunity of calling on so many friends.

"There's been the Major, and the Doctor too, callin' for ye," Miss Skinner informed me when I went in. "Ye'll find the cards up the stair."

Yes, there they were. "Major Glen." I do not altogether regret missing *this* call, though it is civil of the old gentleman to have come, as he has been ill. "Rev. Dr. Roger" I *do* regret, for I am anxious to see him. There is yet another card beside them: "Mr. J. Macaldowie." I should half like to knock *him* up and call him in again to tea and a chat; but he is not in, for his door was ajar. "Mr. J." I wonder what his Christian name is, and if he will let me use it. Macaldowie is an uncomfortable mouthful for English lips. Well, now for some quiet reading after my dissipated afternoon.

## CHAPTER VI.

"I WANT a receipt for this registered letter, please."

"Yes, miss."

"Is Mr. Macaldowie at home?"

"No, he's not."

"When will he be in, do you know?"

"I could not say. Most likely not or evening."

"Did he leave any message for me?"

"Not that *I* know of, miss."

"Well, tell him, will you, when he comes in, that I—that Mrs. Rennie wants to know the *exact* hour of the match on Saturday."

This conversation took place in the Post Office on the Thursday after my drive. The worst of the Post Office is, that when my window above and its door below are both open, I can hear almost every word that is said below. And Miss Skinner being, I fear, a great receiver and retailer of gossip, the Post Office becomes a sort of rendezvous for the inquisitive. Thus I must either hear, *volens volens*, much of the petty scandal of Ruthieston, or keep my window always shut,

which latter alternative is not agreeable, considering the present warmth of the weather, added to my excellent fellow-lodger's "baccy."

I do not think there was any great breach of confidence in hearing the foregoing dialogue. The speakers were Miss Hall and Miss Skinner; and I presently saw the æsthetic young lady, in a tight drab ulster, crossing the street.

The few words brought the conflicting entertainments to my memory, for other matters had rather put them aside. I felt somewhat of Miss Hall's way of thinking, for I am passionately fond of cricket—both playing and looking on. Mr. Macaldowie, I hear, is a great player. But picnics at Cairnbannock do not come in my way every day.

On Saturday morning early a note came for me from Mrs. Rennie, offering me a lift in her carriage to the place of rendezvous; and once more I accepted the kind offer.

She was driving herself this time, an old manservant behind.

"No, Selina is not coming," she said; "she has begged off, being quite determined not to miss this cricket match; and as she found a companion to go with—Mrs. Hay at the hotel—I did not object. Mrs. Hay is a very nice lady-like person, and I shouldn't have liked her to go quite alone; people might talk, you see—in fact people do talk; but I hope it will all come right in time."

"To what do you allude?" I asked, not unnaturally.

"What! Oh, I am afraid I said too much, Mr. Wingate. I have no right to explain further; but no doubt you will know some day." And having said just enough to mystify me, Mrs. Rennie smiled and resolutely changed the subject.

We drove as far as the hill road was good for spring vehicles, at which point the party—a large and merry one—met. Here Captain Ferguson had engaged three farm carts, and in these, among plenty of cloaks and cushions, all who wished to be carried up found places. I, with most of the gentlemen, walked. The road was steep, and the sun was hot; but we persevered, and when at last one of the crags was reached, the air and the view were such as fully to reward our trouble. Far below and around, the country lay spread out like a chart—woods and fields and myriad farms, most of them with their little watering-ponds showing like bits of turquoise; while in the extreme distance, east, west, north and south, the horizon was bounded by purple-crested hills—the long Grampian range, in particular, lying far to the south of us, telling how many, many miles away I had left home and kindred. I could have stood and surveyed the panorama for hours; and at the moment almost wished to be alone, away from the chatter of merry voices which seemed to jar on the grand beauty of the scene.

After our lively luncheon the party scattered over the heathery expanse at will. I found a warm, cosy

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nook under a projecting rock, and here, after some scrambling, I established myself with Archie and Maggie Lindsay—two very friendly young people, who were amusing themselves with my binocular. I always get on with children. Presently I heard some voices in conversation behind the rock—one was Mrs. Lindsay's, the other apparently one of the Ferguson girls'.

"How very jolly Mrs. Rennie is to-day!" said the latter.

"*Isn't* she? I always say Mrs. Rennie is *never* so happy as trotting out a new parson."

"I think she is happier without Selina. I am sure Selina tyrannizes over her."

"Where *is* Selina, by the way? I did not make out."

"Oh, didn't you? Gone to the cricket match—to see the '*splendid* batting,' of course."

"What, with Miss Skinner as a chaperon?"

"No; Mrs. Hay at the 'Glenforth Arms.' Miss Skinner would be a much better one."

"No; you don't mean! What an *extraordinary*—Ah, Mr. Wingate, you have got a snug corner with those chicks!" as the speaker suddenly turned our corner. "I hope they are not troubling you."

"Not at all, Mrs. Lindsay. Archie is telling me all the names of the hills, and Maggie is correcting my spelling as I write them down."

The two ladies laughed and passed on. But their words had not been without effect upon me. One

thing I see—I must not often indulge in drives with Mrs. Rennie, or I shall get the character of being trotted out by her. As to Selina, there is some mystery about her. She has evidently an admirer (or admired) in the cricket field.

We spent some hours on the hill before turning our steps homewards. In descending, fortune threw me and Mr. Lindsay together. He is very agreeable when the outer crust of reserve is worn off, and you grow accustomed to a certain dreamy absence of manner which comes over him now and then. He told me that my two lifelong churchwardens were both very good churchmen, but that one lived almost entirely in England now, the other near Glasgow; yet they had no power to lay down their nominal trust.

“Your predecessor,” Mr. Lindsay said, “wanted to appoint two vice-wardens to act for them, but he could not manage it. And after all, Mr. Wingate, I am not sure but that you are quite as comfortable without any.”

“Perhaps I am,” I answered. “But I must say I hope I shall get a secretary and treasurer.”

“Ah!” Mr. Lindsay answered mildly, and appeared absorbed in contemplating the view.

It was fully half-past seven when Mrs. Rennie pulled up the pony at the gate of ‘The Lilacs,’ where I was to get out.

Selina came down the garden path to meet her, and hand her out of the carriage.

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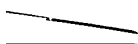
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# RUTHIESTON:

Some Notes by

A BROTHER AND SISTER.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE CHORISTER BROTHERS," "AULD FERNIES' BOB,"  
ETC. ETC.



LONDON:

WALTER SMITH (LATE MOZLEY),

24, KING ST., COVENT GARDEN.

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## CHAPTER VII.

THE visitor did not by any means disturb the Sunday quiet of the Post Office next morning. He and his friend were up early, and went out—I suppose for a stroll—before breakfast, it being a fine bright morning in early June.

The “first Sunday in the month.” I hope there will soon be no first Sundays in the month, as far as my church is concerned; but in the mean time I must follow the custom of the place.

The Scottish Communion Office is used here; a cause of great thankfulness to me, English though I am. In such hasty and discursive notes as mine it would be unbecoming to enter deeply into so high and sacred a subject; but this I must say, that I do not see how any English Catholic, however loyally attached to his own liturgy, can fail to appreciate the surpassing richness and beauty of this glorious rite, the brightest jewel in the crown of the Scottish Church. May she ever duly guard and prize her treasure!

There were more communicants than I expected

from Rae's remarks. A large stream of departing worshippers swept out after the offertory, and in that stream were the Misses Glen and their father, a number of Fergusons, and sundry others. The Lindsays, Mrs. Ferguson and one son and daughter, Mrs. Rennie, and Miss Hall, were among those who remained, also Mr. Macaldowie and his friend. More devout and reverent worshippers than these two young men I never saw in the south. There was one other, also a communicant, whose appearance struck me much. Just as I had begun the opening sentences there walked up the nave a little old man, the very smallest, short of an absolute dwarf, that I ever saw. He had a quaint, wizened face, with very large prominent dark eyes, placed like those of a beetle, and a heavy Inverness cape—far too large for him—completed the beetle-like appearance. He sat him down in a seat just under the pulpit; joined devoutly in the prayers and lustily in the singing, listened attentively to the sermon, and approached the altar reverently.

On this occasion I gave notice that henceforward there would be daily prayers at the church morning and evening, at the hours of nine a.m. and half-past six p.m. I had resolved that I would not put off beginning with what I consider a plain part of my duty, whether I meet with any response or not. Here I am, young and strong and idle—not a shadow of excuse for holding back. If no one comes to church I say the office to myself silently, instead of aloud, that is all. I heard



Major Glen clear his throat significantly at the notice, as well as that which I gave of St. Barnabas' day and its vigil, which fall in this week.

I asked Rae afterwards about the funny little apparition, as he had disappeared before I left the vestry. I find he is a sort of character; an old hand-loom weaver by trade, one of the few yet remaining in the country. He lives fully three and a half miles off. Mr. Hill, I am informed, used to be very kind to him and his wife, who is crippled with rheumatism.

"And does he walk all the way to church?"

"Eh, yes, sir," said Rae. "He's not able now to come ilka time, but just first Sunday maybe; he seldom misses that."

Poor old man! I must go and see him as soon as possible. As last week was a kind of desultory, dissipated one, devoted to making acquaintance with the neighbours, I must try to have this a week of something like regular work.

Coming home that Sunday night from a long ramble after evensong, I heard, on reaching Miss Skinner's, sounds of singing, and such singing as made me, when I entered the house, almost hold my breath and walk on tiptoe, lest I should disturb the singers. It was in Miss Skinner's parlour, and the door was closed. Three voices, treble, tenor, and bass, were singing, at a rather slow time, but in beautifully correct harmony, the well-known hymn tune "Martyrdom"—to what words I could not quite ascertain. The men's

voices were both full and tuneful; but the treble—undoubtedly a female voice—was one of the richest, purest mezzo-soprano organs I ever heard, either among high or low. Such a voice in a congregation would be worth anything; but it was not in mine. I stole up-stairs as softly as I could, not to interrupt them, and could still hear the sounds distinctly. When the hymn was finished they after a few moments started another, apparently “Oft in sorrow, oft in woe:” after that came the ever popular “Sun of my soul;” and then after a little talk the party broke up. No one left the house; so I could only conclude the owner of the magnificent voice to be Tibbie Sellar, and that the two young Churchmen and the Presbyterian girl were meeting on the common ground of hymn-singing.

I intended next day to set off in search of the old man whose appearance had so struck me at church; and meeting Macaldowie at our common door, I asked him if he could give me further details as to the best way of reaching Bannock Brae, which I was told was the name of the hamlet where he lived.

“Yes, sir, I can. It is a good four miles by the road, as you go round the foot of the hill. But there is a shorter road Mr. Hill used to go to him, in good weather, over the edge of the moor. If you liked, sir,” with a little hesitation, “I could go with you and point it out some afternoon when I am not engaged.”

“I should be so glad if you would,” I replied, eagerly. “Would to-day suit you?”

"To-day? Yes; well, I think I could come about half-past three," he said; so we made our agreement then and there.

Half-past three saw me and my companion setting forth on our walk. I have been most fortunate in the weather since I came here, but this afternoon threatened to be showery, so I provided myself with my umbrella.

I was particularly glad to have the excuse for a walk with Macaldowie. Used as I am to making long rounds of visiting alone, I always enjoy a country walk more for the presence of a congenial companion; and there were several things about which I wished to speak to the young fellow. I think *he* is glad of the chance too—of the walk, at all events. His daily life is a monotonous one, with much close confinement to his office.

"I do like this heather to walk upon," I observed to him, after we had left the town behind us. "It is so springy under the feet."

For we had begun to tread on the skirts of the great hill, the short cut which my friend was to show me being across the edge of moorland which surrounded its base, and which had as yet escaped being "impruvved," *i. e.* taken into cultivation.

"You do, sir? That is what Mr. Hill always said. He used to think the moorland heather put new life into him; and when he felt a little better he would take such long walks—I used to grow frightened for him."

My friend was then silent for a few moments : perhaps the reminiscences of Mr. Hill saddened him ; but presently he looked up, saying in his peculiar idiom, with a little shyness in his manner—

“ That’s such a kind letter I got from Mr. Hill this morning. If it is not taking a liberty, I would like you to read it, Mr. Wingate.” He had drawn an envelope from his pocket and tendered it to me.

“ I shall like to read it very much, if you like that I should. I feel much interest in my predecessor.”

“ You will see he speaks very kindly about you, sir ; he was so anxious this church should fall into good hands.”

This, to the best of my recollection, was the letter. I think I can remember nearly every word, for it impressed me much.

“ *Ventnor,*  
“ *June 5th, 18—*

“ MY DEAR JOSEPH,

“ Thank you for your pleasant letter. It was my wish to have thanked you at once ; but all this last week I have been very good-for-nothing indeed, and it was impossible to me to sit up and write continuously ; so you will not think me ungrateful.

“ I was very glad to hear your news that my too long vacant place was at last filled, and by whom. My successor’s name is guarantee for his fitness, if he

inherits his father's piety and abilities. May he be more successful than I was !

"I often look back, especially in these long summer days, to the times at Ruthieston. Strangely, though there was much to depress and disappoint, I think those times were the happiest, altogether, of my life. I often see in fancy the sunlight on the valley, and the cloud-shadows chasing one another over old Cairnbannock, and long for a whiff of Scotch moorland air, and a stretch with you over the heather.

"I hope your father is well, and yourself ; and all things prospering with you. Remember me kindly to him when you see him ; also to any inquiring friends—old Barnard" (that was the name of the weaver to whom I was going), "Rae, and the rest ; also good kind Mrs. Rennie, and the 'lassie with the lint-white locks'—I hope she will have found some occupation. And I should like you, if you have opportunity, to give my goodspeed to my successor, and assure him of my prayers for him and Ruthieston.

"You ask about myself. I cannot say I have made any progress, except progress downhill ; but I do not look for it to be otherwise now.

"Write soon again, and as often as you like ; never think you are troubling me, as you said once. Write about yourself—hopes, fears, and all. If I do not reply you will understand the reason ; and if I do not write I can pray for my friends.

"Now, good-bye, and the Lord bless and keep you.

That His grace may make you perfect, fully furnished to all good works, is the prayer of

“Your affectionate friend (and

“sometime pastor) in Him,

“H. HILL.”

I was some time reading this, as we walked along a cart-track in the heather, and found myself obliged to stand still at last, till, feeling a good deal moved, I folded it carefully and returned it to my companion.

“It is a very beautiful letter,” I said, “and I thank you for allowing me to read it. It is one which you will treasure.” And as he said nothing immediately, I continued: “It makes one feel very humble—myself I mean—coming after a man of such sort as I feel sure he is.”

“I did not think you would be offended,” Macaldowie answered. “I beg your pardon, sir, for saying so much—the very first day I saw you, and still more the first time I saw you enter the church, I knew pairfitly well that you and Mr. Hill would just agree.”

“Agree; yes, perhaps. But as to deserving what he says of me, I wish I did. I am sorry he gives no good report of himself, poor fellow—his health. How long has he been suffering in this way?”

“He was worst—he had caught a very severe cold—the last winter he was here. But Dr. Grassick said one of his lungs had \* been to be far wrong before that time.” And then after a few moments’ silence he said,

\* “had been to be,” idiom. for “must have been”

"So young—he was only deacon when he first came, and he's only seven-and-twenty now—and so much work in him, heart and soul, if he had the power! Isn't it right hard such an one should be laid aside?"

"It seems so," I said. "It is one of those problems which meet us on all sides in the world, which only faith in an All-wise and All-loving Ruler of events can help us to solve. You may be sure Hill's work was done, in the Master's sight, before he was laid aside."

"I suppose so. But what is there to show for it? What avail was it that he wore himself out night and day, as I *know* he did, one way or other, reading and praying, and thinking what he could do more for them? They were all so detairmined against him! Why, if he attempted to bring in any little change for the better—just the least bit of the 'thin end of the wedge,' as he used to say—they'd all be down upon him; people that had no right whatever, that had never done a single thing for the church!" and in his eagerness Macaldowie gesticulated with his arms like a foreigner. "People said to me sometimes he had more friends than he thought. Not a bit. He was not one to stand aloof from friends; he knew every friend he had in Ruthieston, and he might have counted them on the fingers of one hand."

"Perhaps," I said when he paused, "the good seed has been working underground, though we cannot see it, and will spring up by and by."

And indeed I thought, though I could not say it,

there must be uncommon vitality in the influence which had made so warm a partizan of this practical and, as the cant phrase is, hard-headed young Scot.

As to the common idea about the coldness and undemonstrativeness, and all the rest of it, of the Scottish nature, all I can say is, that from my own experience I do not believe in it. I have as a rule found the average Scotsman quite as warm-hearted and as demonstratively so as the average Englishman; in not a few cases considerably more so, as well as more grateful for kindness and sympathy.

I think there must be great affinity between the extreme northern and southern races. I have seen Highlanders who for feature and colouring might readily pass for Italians; also from their impulsive and impassioned nature. I am not sure but there is something of the Italian about Joseph Macaldowie: in the finely-cut, eager nostril, and the long black eyelashes, which give a distinctive character to his keen intelligent face. There is a strong warm-hearted nature, even if it is only on occasions like the present that its expression is actively called forth.

"I can assure you that *I* feel the good of Mr. Hill's work already," I said. "It is everything to have had the ice broken for one. If I am able to carry out any little reforms here, I shall feel that it is owing (under higher Help) to his having prepared the ground for me."



The thread of our conversation was here broken off by hearing the sound of a horse's feet behind us in the track ; and my companion, looking back, said, " That's Dr. Roger."

Mounted on a small sturdy Highland pony was the slight figure of a little old man in clerical attire. He drew his steed courteously to one side on the heather, although we both stood back from the track ; then as I turned to salute him, he took off his hat, saying—

" Mr. Wingate, I am sure. I must have the pleasure of speaking to you to-day."

His appearance and manner both struck me very much. He was small and slight to a remarkable degree, but his head was finely formed, reminding one of that of an apostle in some old master's painting : the high, bald forehead, overhanging eyebrows, clear, deep-set eyes, and gentle though firm curvature of the lips. As to his manner, it had, like his wife's, the beautiful courtesy of a past day ; only that hers was more of the homely kind, while about his was the dignity and polish of a gentleman and scholar, mixed with the benignity of a meek and humble Christian. A true " shepherd " he looked, earnest, loving, devoted, and single-hearted. Such I have since learnt him to be, doing his duty thoroughly according to his creed : small blame to him that the sacred anointing had never been his, nor the golden keys placed in his hand ! Even at that time, though I did not know him, his venerable and gentle dignity claimed my respect ; and

I stepped eagerly forward to take his hand. I think he was pleased by the way in which I met him.

He sprang from his pony with the agility of a boy, and slipped the rein over his arm.

"Our roads are the same, I think, and as we have both unfortunately missed seeing each other before, I must have the pleasure of making your acquaintance now. How do you do, Mr. Macaldowie?" he added, shaking hands with my companion.

"I assure you I am extremely glad of the opportunity, Dr. Roger. I regretted extremely missing your kind call. It was most friendly of you to visit me, and so soon."

"It was only a matter of common courtesy to a stranger," he replied; "still I am most grateful to find that you accepted it in a friendly spirit. I see no reason why you and I should be other than friendly neighbours and fellow-workers, for I think there is work enough for us both to do without trespassing on each other's ground. I hope, Mr. Wingate, our Scottish climate will not try you as sadly as it did your predecessor here."

"I trust not," I answered. "I am charmed with it so far, and your scenery."

"I am delighted to hear you say so. I think it is a very healthy spot for those who can stand the keen strong air. I have lived here forty years, Mr. Wingate; I was here or ever your chapel was built, and I have seen many changes in the course of my ministry. I

remember the first Episcopal minister well—he was a connection of my wife's. And Mr. McCorquodale, he was the longest here. I often saw him too; he was a very learned man, of antiquarian tastes. He spent a great deal of time in examining the sculptured stones of this country. He published a work, of which you may possibly not have heard, but if you would wish to read it, I possess a copy—McCorquodale's 'Druidical Vestiges.' I have met with great kindness and courtesy from the ministers of your church, Mr. Wingate, as a rule."

"I should hope it," I said.

"Yes, it is very true. I am an old man, Mr. Wingate; I have seen many ups and downs in the course of my life. But the older I grow the more persuaded I am that there is room enough in God's world for us all."

"Some now-a-days would make us think there was hardly room for themselves," I said.

"Very true, very true. You are not one of those, I see. And now," as we came to a divergence in the hill-side tracks, "my course lies to the left. Are you bound for the top of Cairnbannock?"

"Not quite, Dr. Roger. I am going to see a member of my flock who lives out here."

"Ah! old Barnard. A very zealous member I have heard, and a remarkable character. But he is not a native of Scotland; he is English-born, and his wife also."

I fancied the guileless little old man, quietly as he said this, had a certain satisfaction in making the announcement; as if he inferred that in going to Barnard I was only ministering to a settler from my own land, not a legitimate sheep of his fold. Myself I was disappointed: I had hoped for a Scotch Churchman and character, and I was to be put off with a fellow-countryman up here in the hills!

"I will wish you good-bye," said Dr. Roger. "I hope you will come and see us again." And with a cordial hand-shake he mounted his pony as actively as he had dismounted, and rode off at a brisk trot.

"That is a fine specimen," I remarked to Macaldowie. "Are all your Presbyterian pastors like that?"

Macaldowie shook his head, smiling. "Here and there we find one of the old type—splendid men most of them are. But they are fast dying out, and the younger set who are coming up are of a very different class."

"I think I shall like Dr. Roger; but I fear he will be disappointed in me if he thinks I shall devote much of my time to searching for—what was it?—'Druidical Vestiges.'"

My friend seemed much amused at this idea.

"How did Hill get on with him?" I asked presently.

"Well, sir, I don't think they ever saw much of each other; Mr. Hill didn't *care* to meet any of the Presbyterian clairgy. Of course," Joseph went on, growing

eager again, "it was, 'Mr. Hill's so uncharitable, so bigoted, et cetera, et cetera.' But do you know, it was not that at *all*." (I cannot possibly convey in writing the expressive emphasis upon that little word "all.") "Mr. Hill was not the least wanting in personal charity; but he had a great dislike at all kinds of Presbyterianism, and naturally he looked on the ministers as representatives of a system which he abhorred." And then he added, "It makes a right odds when you have been born and bred amongst Presbyterians, and most of your friends belong to them, to coming fresh from England with English notions of dissent."

"That I can quite see. I am always trying to guard myself against a narrow English view in my dealings with my neighbours. But personally I would rather have a thorough Presbyterian born and bred than a half-hearted nominal Churchman to deal with."

"That's just it, sir! You've just 'hit the right nail on the head,' as Mr. Hill used to say. It is the half-hearted members that do the harm with us."

It was only in following out a natural train of thought that I asked, "Does Major Glen attend any of the council meetings?"

"Well, yes, he does, at a time. Of course it depends on where the meeting is held, and the state of his health. And I would suppose he was quite as well stopping away."

"Possibly. I should fancy Mr. Lindsay would make a fitter representative."

"Yes; Mr. Hill wished for him, I know. But some of the people were afraid he was 'too high.' And there were very few voters when he was brought forward, for really I think very many of the congregation care nothing whether they have a representative or not."

"Indeed! I should have thought it would be quite a little excitement, the election."

Macaldowie shook his head, smiling shrewdly.

"We are a very 'half-hearted' set in Ruthieston, with a few exceptions."

"Mrs. Rennie, for instance, and Miss Hall, and yourself."

I made the remark jestingly, feeling quite safe after that playful allusion in Mr. Hill's letter to the "lassie wi' the lint-white locks." Indeed the said allusion was no little comfort to me; for between Mrs. Rennie's mystification and Selina's behaviour, I had had an unpleasant suspicion that these excellent ladies might be laying the toils for this comely young merchant and his "expectations." And Selina was by no means the wife I would specially select for the young friend in whom I felt an ever-growing interest.

There was not the least discomfiture in Macaldowie's manner as he laughed heartily and answered, "Perhaps we might include a few more."

"Well, I shall have to call a meeting ere long,

I suppose, and see what stuff you are all made of, eh ? ”

And then I went on to another subject which I wished to bring round.

“ Do you know,” I said, “ that my fellow-lodgers gave me a great treat last night ? ”

“ Oh, sir, I felt quite sorry. I think we must have disturbed you. I knew you were out when we commenced to sing, and then I think we were just carried on and forgot ourselves. My friend Mr. Fyffe is a great singer.”

“ I was not at all sorry, I assure you. I began to think, what if I had a few such voices in my church choir ! ”

“ Mr. Fyffe belongs to Mr. Newton’s choir. I have sung with him there sometimes. But the best voice,” said Joseph, modestly, “ was Miss Sellar’s, and she is not a member of the Church.”

“ Ah, no. But what a splendid voice she has ! ”

“ A *very* good voice,” said my friend, emphatically.

“ She ought to cultivate it, and come out as a public singer. She would make a fortune.”

It was one of those slight, thoughtless remarks that all of us make now and then ; but it appeared for some reason or other to affront Macaldowie, as if I had said something unbecoming ; for he drew himself up and said quite shortly under his breath, “ I hope no one will advise her to do that.”

“ The advice will not come from me,” I said, quietly.

"But what I was going to ask you :was, whether you thought there was any way of getting our church singing a little into order, for there is no order about it now."

Macaldowie considered a little.

"I really could not say, sir. Do you mean, to form a choir?"

"I should *like* a choir, of course—men and boys."

"Mr. Hill was trying for that. He would have liked a surpliced choir; but the very idea is an offence to some people. And they were all so down upon Mr. Hill for suggesting such a thing, and so opposed to it altogether, that until they know you a little better—you must forgive my saying so—I don't really think you would find it answer to bring it forward."

"Could we not have a weekly practice? There are one or two self-constituted singers, I think, who occupy the bench by the harmonium. If we could rehearse the hymns and chants with them, and any others who might join, we could prevent the Sunday performances being so very vague."

"Quite so," said Joseph, meditatively.

"There must be some who would take an interest in it, for there is no lack of voices sometimes in church. I wonder whether we could get a few to meet, with Miss Glen, on—say Thursday nights? I would consult her; and then—you know lots of people—couldn't you beat up a few recruits for me—men or lads, you know? and come yourself, of course."



I could not elicit more than a very cautious Scottish admission : " I might try."

We had now reached the cottage, a poor tumble-down sort of a place of only one floor. I knocked at the door, my friend saying he would wait for me by the stone dyke which marked the space that had once been a little "kailyard," but was now bare and weed-grown.

Old Barnard came to let me in. He was profuse in his expressions of gratitude, and introduced me to his wife, whose appearance is less pleasant than his, she being a large, gaunt woman with a red face. She was excessively talkative, and of the ordinary canting type of her class. I heard a long story about Mr. Hill, and that he was a "precious minister" and a "dear creature," and used to visit them when he looked just fit for his coffin, &c., &c. The old man had plenty of talk in him too; and sang the praises of Mrs. Reid Douglas, on whose ground he lives, in no measured terms.

I remained some time, doing what I could in the way of reading, &c., and left them, having fixed a day for administering the Holy Communion to the old woman, who cannot get to church. I also asked Barnard if he would come to my lodging and get some dinner next time he came to service. Having bid them good-bye, I went to rejoin my friend.

I found Joseph sitting on the dyke, having lighted his pipe, which he showed signs of reluctantly putting

into his pocket on my reappearance. I begged that he would by no means do so on my account, though I could not keep him company. Our walk home was less leisurely than that out had been. The rain, which had been threatening for some time, now began to fall pretty sharply, and we were both glad of the shelter of my umbrella, under which we trudged rapidly back to the town.

## CHAPTER VIII.

I HAVE not put down any notes for some days, having been rather busy.

My matins and evensong have not been thickly attended as yet. Old Rae does not come to ring the bell on week-days: of course, as he is a poor, hard-working man, I don't expect it. The first morning *no* one came; but in the evening Mrs. Rennie and Selina and one of their maid-servants came in, and Mrs. Rennie has come pretty regularly to evening prayers since, but Miss Hall is uncertain. Twice, I think, I have had Joseph Macaldowie; three times Miss May Glen, and once her sister. It nearly always happens that I have one or two at night, but the mornings generally find me alone.

Poor Joseph apologized to me one day for not coming oftener. His office opens at nine; so the hour which I fondly thought would suit some of the idle people better than eight is too late for him. I think he would come if he could.

On St. Barnabas' Day I had a large party of Lind-

says, great and small: a young Ferguson, who is temporarily at home, and seems a nice youth; besides Mrs. Rennie and her companion. I felt quite elated on that occasion.

Then as to the choir. I called at the Glens' to talk about it to the harmonium players. When Miss May found it was to be a mixed sort of affair, she said if papa allowed them they would try what they could do in the way of practising, but that I should find it very difficult to get the people to come. Major Glen hummed and hawed, and evidently thought I was beginning to introduce the thin end of Mr. Hill's wedge; but he did not actually quash the suggestion.

I next called at Mrs. Rennie's to learn her views. She was delighted at anything like "a move in the right direction," she said, and would do anything she could "in her poor way" to forward it. She knew some of Rae's family were fond of singing, and one of her own maid-servants. "And then Mr. Macaldowie has a good voice. Of course you have asked him?"

I said that I had.

"Selina, I'm sure, will be delighted to do what she can. She has a very sweet voice, though not powerful; in fact her forte is playing, rather. And if there should be any little hitch, you know, any time, about the Miss Glens, or that they could not come, she would be delighted to play for them. She would do *all* you tell her—play Gregorian chants or anything."

I thanked Mrs. Rennie, inwardly fervently hoping

that my sister Charlotte would be firmly established at the harmonium before we attempted Gregorian chants.

"I am sorry Selina is not in," Mrs. Rennie went on; "she would have been delighted to have a talk with you about it. But she is gone out to have a little tennis at Mrs. Hay's ground. We have no room here, and I like her to practise so as to be able to join a set when she is asked. Mrs. Hay is so very kind, and it is a nice respectable place. I feel so sure Selina will not meet any undesirable people, you know; it is a very select little hotel." She paused for breath for a moment, but continued: "It is so difficult to get dear Selina out—she sits far too close, I know, at her painting—and I like her to get some fresh air. She has a lovely picture on her easel now, and—but it's quite a secret, Mr. Wingate—means to try for a place at the Scottish Academy Exhibition next winter. Some day when she is in I will get her to show you the picture."

Having got as much out of Mrs. Rennie as I could, I beat a retreat, not feeling much interest in Selina's painting. I went on to old Rae's; partly to see his wife, who is ailing, partly also to talk about the singing class. He seemed a little bit dubious.

"Was Mr. Macaldowie for it?" he asked.

"Yes, I think so. Your family I believe are musical. I hope some may join?"

"Well, perhaps the lassie may go, at a time. I canna say for the boys. The youngsters like daffing

about their own way when their day's work is throwgh, do ye see, sir, and they're aye at the cricket o' evenin's. Wouldna it be sufficecient to practise or sairvice upo' Sundays?"

No, I said very decidedly, I did not think it would; and I hoped as many as could would meet me next Thursday at eight p.m.

My way home led me past the garden of the 'Glen-forth Arms,' which was a fair-sized one, nicely kept, and enclosed with shrubs. The sound of voices reminded me of what Mrs. Rennie had said; and presently I could hear the thud of tennis-balls, and through an opening of the trees I caught sight of the net and the players. Selina Hall and a young woman whom I did not know were playing opposite the innkeeper's son (a youth of some sixteen years) and Joseph Macaldowie. I must say I do hope that young fellow is not going to be made a fool of by Selina. There were one or two other young people standing looking on, but I saw nothing of Mrs. Hay herself.

Well, Thursday has come and gone, and with it my first choir meeting night. At the appointed hour I found Macaldowie, two Rae boys, and a "lassie;" the middle-aged sister of a farmer who comes to church, Selina, and Mrs. Rennie's table-maid. The Miss Glens, who were at the harmonium, had also brought a hand-maiden — whether as a chaperon or a singer I was undecided. Anyhow there was an alarming predominance of the female element.

I met them in my cassock ; wishing to make it as church-like an affair as I could ; and began by addressing a few words to my class, hoping that I need not remind them of the solemnity of the place and of the business in hand, and trusting that their work would be in every sense harmonious.

I then requested the ladies to seat themselves in the second bench from the harmonium, and the male singers in front of them. This arrangement did not seem altogether satisfactory to the fair trebles and altos ; but after a little hesitating and smiling it was carried out.

And now to begin. I was not quite sure which was the best way of setting to work. I am no practical musician myself, but I have a correct ear, and a fairly obedient voice. I can monotone the prayers without falling *more* than three quarters of a tone. I have managed to sing Tallis's Versicles with a choir correctly. I have been used to attending our choir meetings at home ; but only as a pupil, so to speak. Our schoolmaster is a musical despot ; and I should never have dreamt of questioning his authority in things vocal or instrumental. But here is poor Miss Glen, whose ideas do not rise above "Jones in D" and "Melcombe," a tune she adapts to every long measure in the hymnal. I do not know how much Macaldowie knows about this work. He has a good voice, but won't put it out, apparently. The two Rae youths appear to be of that hopeful age when the voice is

about as musical as that of a raven. The young ladies have by far the best of it as we jerk through the *Venite* to an Anglican abomination of an octave's compass.

Miss Hall contrives to have a good deal of whispered conversation with Macaldowie over the back of the seat, with much ostentatious pushing forward and comparing of hymn-books. I wish she would keep away altogether. Miss Rae, who is about fourteen, grins and titters inanely whenever we come to a stop, or I try and explain how *not* to do it. By the end of an hour I am heartily sick of it all, and more than ever convinced of the inexpediency of what a certain wicked younger brother of mine not inaptly terms "a bonnet choir."

The singing might or might not be a slight degree more confident on the Sunday after. But I liked the look of things still less. It is all very well for me to seat my singers according to my ideas of propriety on practice nights, but I have no power of preventing their appropriating the two benches as they like on Sunday, as they come in in the most casual manner. Joseph was in good time, as he always is, and sat where I had placed him; but Miss Rae herded with her two brothers, and Selina coming in later, after ostentatiously placing Mrs. Rennie's books and a shawl which she carried for her, went and sat herself down next to Macaldowie. I saw various glances directed by other members of the congregation at my mixed



chorus. It was certainly un-ritualistic enough to please Major Glen. But I don't want Mr. and Mrs. Lindsay, for instance, who *are* good Church-people, to imagine that this is *my* idea of a Church choir, or anything but a very temporary—I fear also temporizing—state of things. I shall try and explain it to Mr. Lindsay; although I know, if I hint that I should like a surpliced choir of men and boys, of all ranks, that he will suddenly fall to musing over the view, with a mild and meditative “Ah!”

## CHAPTER IX.

I HAVE had my first meeting for the election of office-bearers. I gave notice of it on the Sunday before ; and it was held on the following Sunday, after morning service, according to custom—that being, I fancy, the only time at which it would be possible to catch any one to attend.

Present: Major Glen (the retiring representative), Mr. Lindsay, Captain Ferguson and his son, Rae, Joseph Macaldowie, and myself. The farmer whose sister attends my singing-class lingered in the church at first indecisively, but appeared unable to bring his courage to the point of remaining, *would* not see my encouraging glances, and finally departed with the rest of the congregation. So to business we seven champions went.

Major Glen began by signifying his desire of withdrawing from office altogether. I cannot say that I felt sorry to hear it, and I proposed Mr. Lindsay as his successor. That "retiring gentleman," looking exceedingly grave and benignant, desired to pass the honour to Captain

Ferguson, who had, he said, been so much longer resident in the place than himself, was much better known to them, &c., &c. So it was finally proposed to put it to the vote; and I am sorry to say, for I feel Mr. Lindsay would have filled the post well had he accepted it, it went to Captain Ferguson by a majority of one. The duties of office will not, I am sure, sit heavily on the jovial sailor. Then I brought forward the secretary and treasurership, about which I was personally even more anxious. It was offered in succession to Mr. Lindsay, the Major, and the two Fergusons, but in vain. Mr. Lindsay then proposed Mr. Macaldowie, and young Ferguson seconded the proposal.

Mr. Macaldowie did not draw back. In fact he seemed rather pleased at the appointment, and I was still more so. Our financial year closes in September; and, had the office been thrown back on my unfortunate shoulders, I should have had to spend the ensuing months in drawing subscriptions out of my not too forward flock, unless I was content to send up such a miserable pittance as would cause us to be struck off the Equal Dividend list. And I must say I have a great dislike to begging. I dare say I am wrong: clergymen *must* beg if they are to expect help; but it goes against the grain with me as with many others. But to a fellow like Macaldowie, to whom sending in bills is an every day matter, a few reminders that subscriptions are due will be all in the way of business.

Nevertheless, I could not help noting how these three or four gentlemen, with no particular calls on their time, or at any rate a wide margin for the amusements of life, were content to put off the duty upon a hard-working merchant, and thus to encroach upon his comparatively few hours of leisure.

I may observe, by the way, that I have never been asked to accept Major Glen's "simple hospitality," or to meet Dr. Roger. I do not altogether regret this. The Major does not take to me, nor am I likely to take to the Major. The young ladies are certainly inoffensive and obliging—especially so in the matter of my "bonnet choir."

But I am getting—to use an expressive term of old Rae's—"sair medd" with my bonnet choir. I did not intend the singing-class to be a handle for unmitigated flirtations. I would give a great deal now, that the meetings had never been begun. Never having seen the workings of a mixed class, I was quite innocent of all that might follow in its train, when composed of such elements as mine.

The only recruit Macaldowie has found me is a young clerk from the station: an exceedingly mild youth, with an alto voice, and a leaning towards Episcopacy as represented by Mrs. Rennie's table-maid. He always arrives just before or just after her, and I constantly see him escorting her home afterwards in the summer gloaming. Now, if this is an acknowledged thing, it is all perfectly right; though I would as soon the singing-

class were not the place of meeting. But this is a small grievance to Selina's behaviour. Latterly, she has been "running after" Joseph Macaldowie so openly that it is plain to me one or other of them must discontinue attendance. If I could, I would banish all the female singers; but this is dangerous. If I affront Miss Rae I shall lose both her brothers: any offence to Miss Malcolmson, the farmer's sister, might cause that worthy family to withdraw from the church. And Miss Malcolmson's behaviour is quite unexceptionable, for she never looks off her book—"hardly ever" perhaps I ought to say, for last practice night she *did* look up, and with some surprise, when Selina, after sundry very audible whispered remarks to Macaldowie about "such time—utterly impossible to sing to—quite too absurd," and so forth, swept out of her seat past me and into the harmonium corner, where she poured forth a string of voluble instructions and fault-findings upon Miss May Glen.

I was so grateful to poor Miss May for the meek and quiet way in which she let it all pass over her, instead of taking huff and giving up her place, which I believe was what Selina wished to make her do. I tried to look as stern as possible, while I begged Miss Hall that there might be no further disturbance of the lesson. Miss Hall was perfectly cool and composed at once; and merely remonstrated with me—making eyes at Joseph all the time, though *he* only looked down—by saying that they could not possibly sing the tune to the time

in which it had been played. "Mr. Macaldowie thought so. Would I only ask him?"

To which appeal Joseph replied in a grave whisper: "Oh, Miss Hall, I never wished to interfere."

Miss Hall laid down her book and shrugged her shoulders with an air of injured resignation; and no more was said just then.

If that were all about which Selina concerned herself I should not care. But in and out of the class she cannot leave that unfortunate young fellow alone. However long I keep him talking—which I do purposely—when the class is over, she waits for him, either fussing about the harmonium or standing in the porch; and it usually ends in his escorting her home. I fancy she takes him in to supper at Mrs. Rennie's as often as not.

I cannot help noticing that whereas Joseph seemed at first simply bored, and then amused, by Miss Hall's demeanour towards him, he is gradually growing tolerant if not complacent towards her. I suppose persistent "running after" and flattery of an insidious kind are enough to turn the head of the steadiest young man—even of men not young. Joseph is very young, and very unconscious of his own advantages; but there is no saying what mischief may be done by the coquetry of a silly, affected girl—and Selina is both. Just enough above him in the social scale, too, to give attractiveness and a certain amount of distinction to her preference; while in the more solid qualities she is

immeasurably his inferior. I think I can even perceive a growing change in himself ; and I see less of him, either at home or out. He is always out in the evenings—often at the cricket-ground, as often, I am afraid, at Mrs. Hay's tennis-court. I don't think Mrs. Rennie half guesses at Selina's goings-on. But they are not my business—if only she would leave my young friend alone.

## CHAPTER X.

"I BEG your pardon, sir, for being so late with your breakfast, but my aunt's very poorly the day, and I was hindered with the sorting."

This was addressed to me by Miss Sellar—otherwise Tibbie—on the occasion of her bringing up my tray forty minutes late, and just twenty before church-time—the time, that is, at which I go down and ring my own bell to an unheeding congregation.

"Indeed; I am sorry. What ails Miss Skinner?"

"It's just some sort o' a trouble she takes now and again, at a time; she's very sick, and her head's awful sore. She'll not need to rise maybe for a day or two."

"Bilious headache," I suggested.

"Just that, I believe. And if ye please, Mr. Wingate, will ye be as kind as excuse if everything's not done just as parteec'lar as it should be? I've all the work down-stairs to see to, and I canna lippen to the boy to sort the mails."

"Indeed, I should think not," I said, horrified at the



idea of "lipping to," i. e. depending upon, the small urchin who was kept at the Post Office all day to run with the telegrams and make himself generally useful, but was by no means a person one would wish to see responsible for the correspondence of Ruthieston.

"I hope Miss Skinner will soon be better," I continued. "She ought to keep quite quiet to-day. Oh—and will you have the goodness to say to Mr. Macaldowie that I shall be very glad if he will take tea and spend the evening with me?" I said this thinking that it might be a convenience to all parties if he were thus disposed of.

"He's away to the town the day. He'll not be in or night. But I can let him know, sir."

I thought there was rather a melancholy tone in Tibbie's remark. But she has a plaintive way with her at all times, as many of these Scotchwomen have. She looks, I think, heavy-eyed and subdued; as if the entire charge of the Post Office, or anxiety about her aunt, were weighing somewhat on her mind. I am sorry for little Miss Skinner, for she is an obliging body to me, though she has a sharp tongue, and can use it at times. I suspect if Tibbie were not the meek quiet creature she is, there would be an uncomfortable *ménage*: as it is, she humours old "auntie" admirably.

That afternoon I had a civil call from young Reid Douglas, who is at home for his holidays. He seems a good sort of boy, about sixteen; not handsome, but with

an honest, straightforward manner. He told me he should come to my church pretty often ; he was obliged to go to kirk with his mother sometimes, but he did not care about it. If it were not for Dr. Roger and his mother he should never go. I asked about his school, and his church in England, and found that he attended it regularly there, but had not been confirmed. He "thought he should like to be, some day—didn't think his mother would object."

I had some conversation with him ; and feel convinced that he has, as Mrs. Rennie hinted, the making of a good Churchman in him. I shall be only too glad if he is allowed to follow the bent of his inclination at once ; though I have little doubt that he will choose the Church eventually.

Walking through the town in the afternoon I met Mrs. Rennie, unattended by anything but her little Maltese terrier. She informed me that Selina had gone into the county town to do some shopping for them.

"I hate going to town, Mr. Wingate ; and Selina is such a good shopper ; she does all my commissions and saves me the trouble ; and she knew a friend who was going in to-day who would escort her, which was a great comfort to me ; for this railway is often so crowded, and so many rough country people travelling, I don't feel quite happy when she goes quite alone."

I had my misgivings as to whom the escort might be : I was not wrong, as it proved.

Late that evening—some time after the last train was in—Macaldowie knocked at my door.

“I beg your pardon, Mr. Wingate, for intruding so late. I understood from Miss Sellar that you wished to see me.”

I explained what my message had been, but added that I was very glad to see him, late or early.

“Thank you, sir. I have been in town all day. My father had been requiring my presence. And I wouldn’t have been so late to-night, only one of Miss Hall’s parcels had been carried on, and I remained to assist her in telegraphing after it.”

He spoke quite coolly, but as if it was a matter of course that he should attend upon Miss Hall. This—and Mrs. Rennie’s hint, and various other things which had been revolving in my mind for some time—moved me at last to speak openly to him.

“I say, Macaldowie, you know you will have people talking about you and Miss Hall, if you don’t look out.”

He looked down, more put out than discomfited.

“Let them say,” he said rather sulkily. “What business is it of theirs?”

“My dear fellow, you don’t—you don’t mean that there is anything in it?”

“Anything—in—what?” he asked, slowly.

“Oh, well—she has been a great deal with you lately—hasn’t she?”

“Maybe. It’s not *my* doin’.”

"But you allow it."

"I'm not seekin' Miss Hall. I'm not wantin' her. That's the plain truth, Mr. Wingate."

"I am glad, I must say, to hear you say so. You will not be affronted at my plain speaking? I should like you to look on me as your friend—as you did my predecessor. And I don't think any one who was your true friend would be glad to see you take up with that girl."

There was a half-amused expression on his face—something like that which had struck me the first day he spoke to me. He did not speak for a few seconds. When he did, it was to say :

"I assure you, Mr. Wingate, I never took up with Miss Hall. Mrs. Rennie has been very kind to me, and very civil to my father; and I am very glad to be of any use I can to her, and to her friend."

"Excuse me, I do not think Miss Hall looks at it quite in the same light. And one must be so careful even of appearances—sometimes—that even what is quite unintentional may not be taken for undue encouragement."

"But what is one to do? Is an honest man not to walk along the streets of his own town because a foolish girl waits for him and dodges him everywhere? Really I am glad you spoke, sir, for I should not have brought it forward else; but she's just always laying wait for me. Whatever road I'm going she has some errand the same. I do assure you, sometimes, it is

most annoying; but I can't help it, unless by being downright rude."

"It is very provoking," I said. "But there are some things one can prevent; for instance, it is true that you escorted her to town to-day?"

"Who said so? Who told you- I did, Mr. Wingate?"

"Nobody told me downright, in so many words. I met Mrs. Rennie, and she told me 'Selina had gone in with a friend.' I drew my own deductions, afterwards."

"Mrs. Rennie!" he exclaimed, with a gesture of impatience. "Mrs. Rennie is the greatest mischief-maker! I mean to say, Mr. Wingate—Mrs. Rennie chanced to hear, quite casually, that I was going to town to-day. She immediately arranges it all with 'Selina'" (he did not speak the name, certainly, as if he was in love with it), "and then, just as I'm starting, up come two ladies—'Oh, Mr. Macaldowie, are you going by this train? Then I'm sure you'll kindly look after Miss Hall, for I never like her to travel quite alone,' and so on—and then what can you do?"

I could not help laughing, he asked the question so piteously.

"Bolt into the smoking compartment—I should—and say you were at her service if she wanted anything."

"An' if I had, she'd have made an excuse to fish me out the first stop we came to."

“ Well, it was awkward. But the same doesn’t apply to playing tennis with her so many days in the week.”

“ Well, I do call it rather hard lines if a fellow mustn’t play a sett or two of tennis in a public garden now and then after work is over, just for her! And I declare, she’s not half so bad there as at your singing-class. I suppose I’ll not come there any more?” he added, looking rather sily at me.

“ Certainly not, Macaldowie, if you think it inexpedient. I will never ask you. Indeed, to tell you the truth, I don’t think my singing-class a success, and shall not be sorry if it dies a natural death. When I begin again I should wish to do so on quite another footing.”

“ Mr. Hill was very much against mixed choirs.”

“ I agree with Mr. Hill. And I expect he would agree with me in much that I have been saying to-night, eh?”

Joseph only looked down and chuckled. But he is a good fellow not to take offence; and I really hope the few words that have been said may do some good.

He told me, to change the subject, that the “ Airl and Countess of Glenforth” came out by the train to-night. I did not know there was a countess. I am not particularly elated at the news, and I said I hoped he would not bring any clerical friends down here to preach. Then we had a good laugh together over Major Glen’s story—an old one to Joseph.

I begged, finally, that he would make himself free of my sitting-room while Miss Skinner was indisposed. I feel that he will never presume upon my offer. He thanked me, saying that he hoped she would soon be about again, for it was inconvenient, "and made things come very heavy upon Miss Sellar," he added compassionately. Then—for it was growing late and dark—we parted for the night on the best of terms: and Joseph retired, to smoke across the passage the pipe he had been too considerate of my feelings to bring out in my parlour.

## CHAPTER XI.

THE summer months passed on without bringing anything very noteworthy to Ruthieston in general, or to myself in particular.

August saw a considerable increase of my congregation, in the way of summer visitors and sportsmen. There was a good deal of gaiety going on, such as shooting-parties, garden and tennis-parties, and so forth. With the first, of course, I had little to do: except coming in now and then for an invitation to the dinners with which they wound up; and, in gratitude I am bound to add, very liberal presents of the game slaughtered by my kind friends. Of the latter I had my fair share; though I did not lay myself out for invitations. But I do like a good round of tennis now and then: and think I can work the better after it. Sometimes I take a turn at the cricket-field, where I meet a different class: the townspeople, from whom, I must say, I always receive great courtesy.

By the end of the last quarter of our financial year my treasurer had given in all the subscriptions he had



been able to collect, and I sent up the sum total to head-quarters. I am not going to gratify curiosity by stating what it was. I do not think we were much better or much worse than most of our neighbours—and I dare say any one who wishes to know what exact amount Episcopalian Ruthieston subscribed to the maintenance of its Church, can find out for himself by consulting the Council's printed report for the year, under the head of Ruthieston, St. Peter's. One item in the list of subscribers struck me a good deal: namely, one shilling from the old Barnards, given unsolicited.

My choir, or rather singing-class, has died the natural death I desiderated for it. After one or two more trials, subsequent to our conversation recorded in last chapter, Joseph Macaldowie discovered that his other avocations became more pressing in the evenings, and begged me to excuse his attendance. That attraction withdrawn, Miss Hall became irregular, and finally withdrew herself and table-maid. The young clerk came once more, and then went away for his holiday. The Masters and Miss Rae, never enthusiastic, dropped off by degrees; and when we were reduced to a minimum of Miss Malcolmson and the Glens' servant it was time to come to an understanding with Miss Glen that there was no use in keeping up the sham any longer. I hoped, by and by, when I had my sister, who is musician enough to teach as well as accompany, to begin afresh and in a more orderly form.

That time, however, still seems indefinite; for the

parsonage gets on very slowly in spite of my constant visits of inspection, and will not be ready for some months at least ; so I must fall back on patience and my lodging over the Post Office.

I think my word in season has been of use to Joseph Macaldowie. I have certainly seen and heard less of the constant attendance on Miss Hall. That lady is very distant to me—not that she was ever otherwise—and I fancy Mrs. Rennie is less effusive. But new parsons, like new toys, I suppose, lose the freshness which is their charm, after awhile.

My musical meetings, had they continued, would have had a counter-attraction—a much greater one of course—in those of the glee-party. I see I have not mentioned the Ruthieston glee-party, which has been practising for some time, and generally gives two or three concerts in aid of parochial charities, in the end of the season. It is chiefly composed of townsfolk. Joseph Macaldowie is the leader, I understand. I have not heard if Miss Hall sings ; but the magnificent-voiced Tibbie—in whom Charlotte, in her letters, laughs at me for discovering a mute inglorious Dolby or Patey—is one of the chorus. I only heard this by chance one day when Miss Skinner brought in my supper, saying that Tibbie was gone to a practice.

I came in for the tail of a practice at home one night. Joseph and Miss Sellar were apparently rehearsing some song, with a concertina accompaniment ; but as soon as they heard poor me come in they “ shut up.” I have

never heard the much-dreaded violin till one night, when Macaldowie came to me very humbly to know if his practising a little would disturb me. The fact was, he had been very much pressed to get up a solo for "one of our glee-party's concerts. And I have no time for practising unless at nights," he said, rather pitifully, "I'm really no performer, but this is a very easy solo, and a lady has promised to play the accompaniment, and I don't like to disoblige."

I bade him go on and prosper. I wrote that week's sermons to a running accompaniment of the 'Blue Bells of Scotland,' in good time but indifferent tune, with variations consisting of a good many squeaks and buzzes; but I would not have objected to the poor fellow's practice on any account, and I don't think the sermons were worse than they would otherwise have been.

In due time the bill of the first concert was issued; and Macaldowie waited on me one day to hope that I would accept of a ticket, as he had several to give away. I accepted of a ticket, gratefully, also of a programme.

Glancing down it I felt a little put out—perhaps it may seem absurd to say so—at coming to the following line:

FANTASIA ON A SCOTCH AIR.

VIOLIN AND PIANO.

MR. J. MACALDOWIE AND MISS HALL.

Of course there is no reason whatever why Joseph

should not play his solo to Miss Hall's accompaniment, any more than sing with any other member of the glee-party; but still I might be forgiven for fearing that it might be an excuse for more meetings with the young lady than were altogether good for Mr. J. Macaldowie. Not that I suspected him really of caring for her, now. But I had taken, it may be seen, a strong liking to the young fellow—a liking that might ripen into a lifelong friendship. And I strongly deprecated for him the appearance of folly of any kind: the laying of himself open to being “talked about.” Still more, the influence of such a woman as I could see Selina Hall to be. And that Selina for her own ends, and Mrs. Rennie for Selina's, were trying to get hold of him, I had long seen to be the case.

Joseph's friend, Mr. Fyffe, was coming out for the concert. Being a fine singer, he had been asked to contribute a solo; and the concert being on Friday evening (*soirées* always are, here, I find!), he was to lodge as before at Miss Skinner's “ower Sabbath.”

The great day came. The drill hall—the place of rendezvous—was well filled, but chiefly by townsfolk and their friends. Mrs. Rennie was installed in a front seat, and she had a friend with her—a lady unknown to me. The Miss Glens too went, under the wing of a nice old lady, who lived near but was not one of my flock. There, too, were Dr. and Mrs. Roger, and a niece: Mr. Milligan, the Free Kirk minister, and his daughter; and various notables of

Ruthieston, all more or less known to me by sight and name.

The glee-party consisted of some score of men and women, resident in the place or its suburbs ; a very quiet, orderly party indeed, under my friend's leadership. Among the ranks of the fair singers I soon perceived the familiar face of Tibbie Sellar, who, I was glad to see from the programme, was also to sing a solo part—or, more properly, a duett with Macaldowie. I suppose the song they were practising one day.

I don't think there was anything very remarkable about the glee-singers' performance, except as demonstrating to me, a stranger, how much real honest music exists among these good folks of the north ; even if their voices are on an average harsh as well as hearty, as compared with, say, a London choir of the same calibre.

I felt a little nervous when it came to the violin solo. Miss Hall had been sitting beside Mrs. Rennie till the time came ; and now the violinist handed her up to the raised platform. She had thrown off her cloak which had hitherto concealed her dress, and now revealed her tall figure robed from head to foot in a blue dress of the "intensest" dye—really not unbecoming to such a *blonde cendrée*, only that there was too much of it ; and, for all decoration, a sun-flower—out of Mrs. Hay's garden I felt sure—against the side of her dress. While as to the hair, it was more "towzled" than ever, and to my unappreciative eyes looked as if it lay every way but the right.

She sat down languidly to the piano: languidly she played the opening chords with her long slender fingers. Then came a few flourishing arpeggios from the bow, and the air got under weigh. I was thankful to see that poor Macaldowie was far too nervous, far too much taken up with the difficulties of "shifts" and "double stopping," to have the hundredth part of an eye for his colleague's airs and graces, as she sprawled through her part, bending over the piano and looking at her hands all the time; though Mr. Fyffe, who seems to have come somewhat under her spell also, was most assiduous in turning over the music for her.

They were immensely applauded when all was over. I felt, I must say, a little relieved. I don't like the violin unless it is in the hands of a professional player. Perhaps because I once tried it myself, when I was young and foolish; and so learnt how it is the one instrument of all others that will not lend itself to a smattering of skill.

Mr. Fyffe sung his solo, "The Village Blacksmith," also to Miss Hall's accompaniment. I heard Mrs. Rennie whisper to a sympathizer that dear Selina was so good about making herself useful. Mr. Fyffe has a soft, full, baritone bass, which suits the song admirably.

But still I think, and always shall think, that the treat of the evening was the old Scotch ballad of "Huntingtower," sung *à deux* by Joseph and Miss Sellar. I suppose few, even English people, but have

some acquaintance with this ballad. It consists of a dialogue between two lovers, in the course of which "Jamie" informs his sweetheart that she cannot go with him—

"For I've a wife and bairnies three,  
And I kenna how ye might 'gree, lassie."

Upon which the injured Jeanie turns upon him with a strain of passionate reproach—

"Ye suld hae told me that before, Jamie,  
Ye suld hae told me that before, laddie,  
For had I kent your fause fause heart,  
Ye'd ne'er hae gotten mine, Jamie.

"Gin your heid were sair, Jamie,  
Gin your heid were sair, laddie,  
I'd take the kerchief frae my neck,  
Tie up your coal-black hair, Jamie."

And the melting pathos, the rich, thrilling sweetness of the full voice, quivering sometimes with its own fullness, and showing that Tibbie, like a true musician, realized for the moment the part she was acting—surpassed anything I have ever heard among amateur performers. And when in reply, Joseph, slightly turning towards her, with the lurking sense of humour which is one of his characteristics, broke in with,

"For I've no wife or bairnies three,  
I only said it to try ye, Jeanie"—

the effect was really dramatic.

I was not surprised when the clapping and "roughing" was so persistent as to demand an encore of at least the *telling* part of the ballad; though I thought it seemed a little hard upon Tibbie to have to wind herself up to the repetition of that splendid piece of acting in song. She does it so quietly too, with scarcely any change of the expression of her face, which, in spite of the ordinary plain features, always has a certain pathos in it. I think she has the face of a woman with a large capacity of patient endurance.

Happening to glance round as the song ended, I caught a glimpse of a very different face—that of Selina Hall. She had returned to her seat by Mrs. Rennie, and was leaning forward slightly, her face rigid, her great, light-coloured, languid eyes positively glowering at the singers. If ever I saw hatred and jealousy in a woman's face it was in hers then.

I was talking over the concert with my two fellow-lodgers on Sunday, having asked them to take tea with me before evensong. I like Mr. Fyffe on further acquaintance. He is a very unassuming young man, though reserved and rather blunt in manner.

I told them I had never had a greater treat than hearing the old Scotch ballad so well sung; and he agreed with me, saying, "It does suit Miss Sellar's voice most admirably."

"I wonder she can sing so well with so little practice," I said.



"She's not needin' to practise," said Joseph curtly. "It's all in her, and it must come out."

"Aye, she's all song," quoth Mr. Fyffe.

"By the way, are you going to favour me with any trios to-night?" I asked. "I mean in the way of Sunday music."

"If my friends are willing, maybe," said Fyffe, looking at Joseph.

"If Miss Sellar is inclined," he said. "By the way, Willie, have ye got yon tune ye were for her learning, last time? It's not in her kirk hymnal, for I've looked it all through."

"I think I have, and the words too," said Fyffe.

"She does not object, then, to singing the Church hymns?" I said. "I should fancy some were too Catholic for Presbyterian lips."

"I don't think she'll object," answered Fyffe, in the driest possible manner. "She's of a very obliging disposition, Miss Sellar, specially—specially in the matter of hymn-singing."

Joseph pulled out his watch abruptly—

"Twenty minutes from six, Willie. We'll require to wish Mr. Wingate good evening." So they departed, and I went to prepare for church.

## CHAPTER XII.

MY note-book has lain untouched for some time ; partly from other business, partly from the absence of anything special to record.

Early in October I went into our principal county town, to attend the Church Council meetings which this year were held there. I spent some days in town, but they were chiefly occupied with the meetings themselves ; and as any one who cares can read the report of these meetings in the public journals, I am not going to say anything about them here—further than that as concerns Ruthieston and myself personally, the Equal Dividend was better than I expected, and we were honourably noticed for a decided rise in our congregational subscriptions since last year.

Of course I was brought in contact with most of my brethren of this and other Scottish dioceses ; with some of whom I had interesting and friendly discussions as opportunity occurred. One, the Rev. Adam Fyffe, especially impressed my imagination. He is the “cousin” to whom Miss Skinner referred as related

to Joseph's friend : a son of the soil, a Scotchman of the Scotch, but a true son also of his Mother, a humble, devout, learned Christian, grown gray in the service of his Lord. His charge is in the same county as mine, and not *very* far distant ; so I hope I may see something more of him as time goes on, and, if I can get a holiday, accept his invitation to pay a visit to his church and home. From what I gather, he has everything in first-rate working order there ; though he makes no parade of it, and seldom even sends a report to our particular ecclesiastical paper.

The weather is now beginning to get chilly : we are far on in October ; and my two little rooms, which were baking hot in the summer sun, are very sensitive to the early frosts. My parlour-chimney smokes too, I find ; and I cannot sit and read or write in the evenings without a fire now. I sigh more than ever for a home, however humble, of my own ; and sometimes look longingly at the cosy firelight glow in Miss Skinner's parlour (whose well-used chimney does not smoke), where Joseph Macaldowie is privileged to spend his evenings at home.

In what regards my congregation, I think we are very much *in statu quo*. I have weekly celebrations now, alternately early and late ; but very few attend them. My daily services are a myth. Even Mrs. Rennie and Selina are grown lax in attendance ; and I have not been favoured with a drive in the pony-carriage for many a long day.

I had one letter, some time ago, from Major Glen—a kind of *warning* letter, when I began with early celebrations. But I declined entering into argument with him. Since then his daughters have been less regular in attendance, often leaving the evensong to shift for itself in the way of instrumental accompaniment; for Miss Hall, once so anxious to perform herself, has never come forward. I do not feel disposed, either, to ask her.

Have I brought any outsiders to the Church? I could hardly say. Frank and Ina Reid Douglas came pretty regularly during his holidays: now that they are over, I fancy Ina goes with her mother. I feel sure somehow that her leanings are churchward; but she is a gentle, pliable creature, and of course, with no definite Church teaching to guide her, she goes whither she is wished at the time.

I have seen others of the townsfolk, not members, come at times to evensong. Dr. Grassick once or twice, and some of his children, also temporary lodgers; and lately Tibbie Sellar has made her appearance there, whether influenced by Mr. Fyffe and the hymn-singing I cannot say. I felt for some time half inclined to speak to her, seeing her as often as I do; and yet I am always afraid, lest by notice unduly I scare the timid bird from the threshold where it might pick up some useful crumbs. But for three or four Sunday evenings now she has been so regular, that I felt almost as if shrinking from my duty by silence. So one Monday

evening, when she had brought up some coals for my too refractory fire, I took heart of grace and began :

"I see you come to our church sometimes, Miss Sellar."

Miss Sellar smiled—and blushed.

"Do you like the services?"

"Pretty well, sir."

"Have you ever attended them before?"

"Yes, sir."

"They are very simple, are they not? Nothing at all difficult to follow, after the first?"

"Yes, sir."

"Have you a prayer-book, by-the-way? I shall be happy to give you one to use when you come."

"Thank you, sir; yes, I have one."

And then Tibbie, having coaxed the fire into something like a pretence of burning steadily for the nonce, after turning round to give it a parting admonitory look, went away, leaving me with the sensation of being decidedly snubbed.

Two days afterwards I was returning from a visit to the old Barnards in a somewhat despondent frame of mind. For, having for some time had my doubts of Mrs. Barnard, I found her (going in unexpectedly) in so evident a state of insobriety (to put it mildly), that any ministrations of a pastoral nature would have been utterly out of place. She was beyond admonition; but I talked very seriously to the old man, who, however, did not take it in as good part as I hoped.

I was obliged to say that, unless I had some subsequent expression of penitence, my next monthly visit and service must be postponed. And old Barnard appeared to think me extremely hard and uncharitable.

Coming home across the foot of Cairnbannock, as I said, my thoughts took a somewhat desponding turn. I had been at my cure five months, and seemed to have little to show for the time. I have so few supporters that my efforts go for little. Those who do sympathize with me generally stop short at sympathy. I want a great many things; and if I hint at such to any of the ladies, in which they might help me if they chose, I get such kind smiles, and "Yes, wouldn't it be an improvement?" or, "How nice it would be," for instance, "if we had a new altar-cloth, and vases, and candles, and so forth!" But smiles won't buy these things, and I can't afford them myself; and I don't think it fair to beg from friends at home, who have plenty of claims on them already, for my distant parish; and so I go without. The choir too—with the best intentions, what can I do? The Church school—that backbone of an English choir—does not exist in Ruthieston. I want one, less as a choir-nursery than a means of influencing the rising generation; but it stands to reason that I can't start a school alone. One or two energetic lay people could easily help me; but from all whom I have asked I get sympathy—*et preterea nihil*. Till Charlotte comes—the "good time coming" to which I look forward—I could hardly manage a

Sunday school even, though I know Joseph Macaldowie would help me there ; and he has been used to teach in a night-school in town. But I feel almost scrupulous about laying more upon him.

The evening seemed in harmony with my thoughts. It was a dull, gray day : the spur of moorland was looking drear and brown with the faded heather ; while here and there, at a long distance from me, a wild grouse or blackcock, a survivor of the season's sport, grown wary by experience, rose whirring up from the ground with its strange hoarse cry. There was a chill feeling in the air, as though the snow of winter were not far distant.

It was with a sense of relief that, on entering the track which led to the turnpike road, I perceived Joseph Macaldowie a little in advance of me. He is one of my parishioners who does not seem likely to disappoint me ; and he is ready usually to give me more substantial help—of head or hand, or, as far as he can afford, of money—than most of my sympathizers. Consequently I hailed him, on overtaking him, with a cheerful greeting :

“This is a chilly evening, isn't it ?”

“Yes, sir ; it is—a cold night. I think it won't be long or we have snow.”

I shuddered involuntarily.

“You have never seen one of our Scotch winters, Mr. Wingate ?”

“No. I must say I was quite looking forward to it,

at a distance. And I don't mind snow when it comes; but one always feels worst when it is coming."

"I think so," he agreed. "But we generally say the winter is better when we have an early fall; and it does not lie long at this season."

I told him then about my trouble with old Barnard, or rather Mrs. B. He shook his head with a little smile.

"Mrs. Barnard was one of Mr. Hill's worst trials," he said.

We walked on a little way in silence; and then Joseph said abruptly, but with a certain hesitation of manner:

"Miss Sellar was so pleased at your speaking to her the other night, sir, about the church."

"Did she tell you I had spoken to her?" I asked, in some wonder.

"Yes, she did. She said you spoke so kindly."

"Do you know, I was afraid I had said too much. I feared I might frighten her."

"I don't think that." And presently he said, looking down a little shyly: "Perhaps you are not aware, sir—Miss Sellar and I have made it up." I was so unaccustomed still to their idioms, that for a moment I misunderstood him: his manner, however, would have enlightened me, even if he had not added, "We're to get married some day."

Surprise, great and by no means pleasurable, kept me silent. My model Churchman, my secretary and



treasurer, and most hopeful parishioner—clever, handsome, and well-to-do in the world—to marry this poor, plain, ignorant Presbyterian girl! It was a come-down to my ideas. I was so long without speaking that he must have thought it strange, for he said at last :

“Maybe you hadn’t thought it, sir.”

“No, I had not, indeed. I never fancied you would choose a Presbyterian.”

“Oh, aye, she’s a Presbyterian born, I’m aware; but she’ll not be one after a bit.”

“And I always hold that the closest union of all should include absolute union in the highest things—faith and worship.”

“Quite so. But am n’t I saying—excuse me, sir—she’ll join the Church by and by?”

“Join it—yes, nominally; for your sake. I should not have thought *you* would be satisfied with that.”

I spoke bitterly, I knew. I felt bitter just then. Joseph Macaldowie *was* to disappoint me after all; in the most important step in a man’s life.

He answered quite quietly, but as if my objections did not concern him :

“I’ve seen convairts that were just as good, and better, Churchmen than some born and bred to the Church. Tibbie Sellar’s not one to do a thing by halves, whatever.”

“I beg your pardon, Macaldowie—I do, upon my word!” I exclaimed. “Of course you must know your

own affairs much better than I can. An Englishman cannot possibly judge."

"I believe it makes a difference," he replied.

"In some respects, no doubt. You must excuse me—I have always had a very strong feeling against mixed marriages. I have seen some that turned out very unhappily."

"What, with Churchmen and dissenters?"

"Yes; and Romanist and Anglican."

"Eh, aye, Romans. They take all and give nothing."

"And what do *you* mean to do, pray?" I asked jestingly.

"Me? Oh, we'll not quarrel. Tibbie will never seek to conter me."

"And how long has this been 'making up,' Joseph?"

"Oh, well, I could not say. Since ever we knew one another, I suppose."

"What does Mr. Hill think?"

"Mr. Hill doesn't know. In fact we have not spoken about it at all till—I just wished to let you know, sir, being in the house. You might think it strange—and besides, you have been very kind to me."

"Up to this point, eh? Well, I am afraid you think me very uncivil now. But I am hard to please where you are concerned; and she is rather below you by birth, is she not?"

"She below me? Not a bit. Her father—Sellar, Balwhinnie—is one of the largest farmers in Macbryde district. Her own mother died young; and her father's

married again, and there's a large young family coming up, and that's the way she wouldn't stop at home ; so she's come to do for herself with her aunt here."

"I see. And am I to understand that—that she wishes to become a member of the Church at once, and to put herself under regular instruction for it?"

"Oh, well—perhaps that will come in time. We don't want people speaking about it in the mean time. You'll be as kind as not to mention it to anybody, Mr. Wingate?"

"Certainly not. You have been very discreet hitherto, for *I* never suspected either of you. But, my dear fellow, you do not expect anything to be a secret at the Post Office?"

He laughed a little.

"Miss Skinner knows, of course ; but she is sworn to secrecy. She can keep a secret, the old lady, none better, for as long a tongue's she has. Auntie has been very good to me, I'll not say!" And presently he added : "My father is something like you, sir. He has other views for me. But this is a case in which a man must judge for himself, don't you think, sir?"

"Undoubtedly," I answered.

"Do you mind, sir? You gave me advice a short while ago, about a sairtain young lady."

"Yes ; and you followed my advice then."

"I followed your advice ; very well, I'll just tell you the honest truth, Mr. Wingate." He looked into my face with that irrepressibly funny expression. "I did not

think it was anything wrong to me to wait upon Miss Hall, at a time. I knew my own mind then, and I meant nothing but civility. Well—but I found out (after you had spoken to me) quite in a casual sort of way, that *she*—Miss Sellar, I mean—didn't like it, so of course I was to drop it then; which was my reason for withdrawing from the choir meetings, and so forth."

(This, then, was the explanation of Miss Tibbie's sometime pale cheeks and heavy eyes.)

"In plain English, you mean me to understand," I said, "that you were only influenced by consideration for Miss Sellar, and did not care a fig for my advice?"

"Oh, well, Mr. Wingate, if you must put it so——"

"Well, we have certainly both been in the Palace of Truth this afternoon," I said; "but I don't see that we need be the worse friends for that. In conclusion, let me do what I should have done at first, and wish you all happiness in your choice—which indeed I do sincerely."

"Thank you very much, sir," Joseph said, turning to me with an effusive warmth which I have seldom met with in my own countrymen. "I feel no doubts myself, if all is well; and I think, perhaps, when you know Tibbie better, you will see it in a different light."

"I have always thought her a very modest, unassuming young woman—and most obliging," I said.

He nodded assent.

"I'm aware she's none of your pretty, showy girls—she's my senior by three years, too," he added, with a

droll deprecatory casting down of his long eyelashes ;  
“ but so as she pleases me I don’t see that that makes anything—anyway, it’s my own affair.”

I could not dispute this point.

“ And now, sir, you’re going straight home—I’ve a man to see at Glenforth Lodge—so I’ll just wish you good-night.”

And with as hearty a handshake as ever, Joseph turned away, leaving me with certainly food enough for meditation for that evening.

### CHAPTER XIII.

AFTER Joseph Macaldowie's announcement to me of his engagement to Miss Sellar, I confess I felt a certain amount of consciousness in facing that young person in our daily and ordinary intercourse.

Tibbie, however, was just the same as usual herself: so perfectly unconscious and matter-of-fact, that it was impossible to feel any awkwardness long. I did not approach the subject of the Church again at present, neither did she.

Fate, however, ordained that I was to see a good deal of Tibbie Sellar shortly afterwards. For the snow which had been threatening, came—with a vengeance, I thought—though Ruthieston folk'said it was a very slight fall. And, being little used to snow of any depth, I went out one day as usual without taking special precaution: got my feet and ancles dripping wet, the result being a pretty severe cold.

I was terribly afraid of being laid up on a Sunday; and did my best to cure myself in the inside of a week. I went out on the Sunday, and struggled through my

services with no voice to speak of; and thereby so increased my cold that by night I was lying in bed with a great deal of pain and oppression on the chest, and found myself thinking involuntarily of poor Hill.

I was reduced to bed for several days; during which Tibbie took me in hand assiduously. And I must say that in the matter of hot bottles, hot gruel—sweet oatmeal gruel, mind you—not the nasty compound we poor English get under the name of “groats”—and linseed or bran poultices, Tibbie is a consummate artist.

Likewise she is quiet, and does not rouse you out of a nap with a double knock at the door, or rattle the fire-irons, or shake the floor with her tread. She is not a chatterer either. From the morning when she found me disconsolately barking in my wall-cupboard bed, and “doubted I had taken the cold,” to the point of my convalescence, she never inflicted unnecessary conversation upon me. She would ask me each morning when she came in to open the shutters, in her pleasant but plaintive voice, “if I felt myself a little better?” and observe that the morning was stormy, or frosty, or fair, as the case might be; and that would be the extent of her talk. Miss Skinner was very attentive also: but of course being an old woman she did not greatly affect running up and down stairs; so Tibbie had most of the nursing, in so far as I needed nursing.

Tibbie's nursing, however, succeeded to the extent of getting me on my feet by the next Sunday, so I was

not obliged to ask for help. My congregation is now much reduced. Many of the neighbouring gentry leave for the winter : some for the continent, some for England, some for the county town. Of these latter are, I find, Mrs. Rennie and Selina. They find Ruthieston so dull and so cold in winter ; so they take a little house in the town for three or four months. The Reid Douglasses go away for Frank's Christmas holidays, so I shall not see anything of him this winter. The Fergusons are to stay over Christmas ; also the Lindsays, but though these latter are very good about coming their long drive to church in almost all weathers, I seldom see them at other times. I cannot get so far at this season ; and I have only once been asked there to dine and sleep, in the shooting season.

I do not expect a lively winter. No society to speak of : little work to do : a comfortless lodging, and severe weather, are not a cheerful combination of circumstances. To crown it all, Joseph came in one evening to tell me that he too is on the wing ; going into town to stop with his father for some time.

"I shall be out pretty often to see to the business here," he said, "and to see *her*, you know," he added ; "but my father's for me to make my head-quarters with him, and there's not much doing out here at this season to require me."

"True ; and your father lives alone, does he not ?"

"Yes. He has just a housekeeper. He has been a widower many years, and has none but me, you may



say, just to look to; so of course I go when he wishes me."

"To be sure. It will be nice for him when you are settled, will it not?—and he has your home to go to when he is lonely."

I had not hitherto had any further talk with Joseph about his prospects; for, spite of Tibbie's many and sterling good qualities, I still thought that Joseph might have done better for himself. And I had my doubts as to Tibbie's conversion proving more than nominal, as she was evidently by no means anxious about it.

His face clouded a little at my words.

"My father is not at all kind about my marriage," he said. "In fact, it's just that which makes things rather awkward" (*ackward*, he called it) "for me."

"He wants you to marry a Churchwoman, eh?"

"He wants me to have no will of my own in the matter, just—to let him choose for me. And it'll not do. My father's just extraordinar' positive—when he takes a notion in his head."

"Has he seen Miss Sellar?"

"No."

"And what is his objection?"

"Oh, well, I told you he had his own ideas. I needn't say more of that. But he'll not move me."

I thought it evident that Joseph had inherited a little of the "positiveness," though no doubt he was hardly used.

"I suppose he is only anxious for your good," I said. "Perhaps he shares my idea as to mixed marriages."

"I don't quite think that—as a rule. And in fact, Mr. Wingate, it would not hold water here. Just think what would become of us Episcopalians, if we were restricted to our own congregations for choice!"

"Ah, well, I suppose it would be a hard case. And if the choice leads to ultimate conversion, perhaps it helps to spread the Faith."

"Of course it does," he answered.

"And, by-the-way, if Miss Sellar would like it, I should be very happy to lend her any books, at any time, that might be of use to her."

"Thank you, sir. I shall tell her."

"I am sorry, for my own part, that you are going. I shall be very solitary."

I felt what I said. And when my fellow-lodger was actually gone, I felt it still more. I missed him going and coming, the few friendly words of greeting, the fireside chats—even the little arguments and differences of sentiment wherewith we occasionally "sharpened" each other's "countenances," still continuing "friends." I believe there was a very affectionate leave-taking between him and Tibbie down-stairs; and when Tibbie came into my room with red eyes, I felt quite low-spirited, and ready to sympathize.

Tibbie was really a different creature for a day or two. I was quite pleased to see this, for it was so

natural, besides being complimentary to my friend. She forgot things, and went about altogether in a dreamy sort of way quite proper to a forlorn maiden with an absent lover; being very penitent when she discovered her mistakes, the more so as I forebore to complain when my fire went out, and my tea-tray was brought up sugarless or spoonless.

One day, after her spirits had recovered their balance somewhat, I ventured to offer her the loan of some numbers of a little Church magazine which I took in; thinking that perhaps indirect influence might be an opening for more definite instruction. She coloured, thanked me, glanced at the books, and then said, "I have seen these, thank you, sir; I have had them lent me before."

"Ah! I did not know. Being an English publication, I thought it might be new to you."

"No, sir. I have read all yon books. Mr. Macaldowie takes them in."

Oh, ah, Miss Tibbie, I am forestalled there, I inwardly thought. There has been unseen influence at work. I *should* like, however, to get you under proper instruction, and teach you your catechism, before you are in a position to have others to teach. Who baptized you, I wonder, and with what form, etc., etc., etc.?

But, just about this time I got a letter from home; which, for the nonce, diverted my thoughts from Tibbie Sellar and her concerns—at any rate gave me food for thought and anticipations of a pleasurable nature, apart

from my neighbour's business, and more directly affecting myself.

It would seem as if one of my letters home, written in a weak state of convalescence after my sharpish attack of cold, had conveyed, without my exactly intending it, such a strong impression to my friends at home of my forlorn condition, as to cause them some solicitude. They began to consider that I wanted some one to look after me; and this letter to which I refer contained a suggestion that, if I could find any sort of accommodation for her, my sister Charlotte should, immediately after Christmas, set out to come to me. In a month or two more, the parsonage might be expected to be dry and habitable: the workmen had left it for some time; but there was all the furniture, linen, &c., to choose, and my friends justly opined that I should be greatly benefitted by Charlotte's advice and assistance in this matter, besides her personal supervision of myself and my health.

It need not be said that I jumped eagerly at the notion. Joseph Macaldowie's absence smooths away all difficulty as to the lodgment; for I can shift into his bed-room, and Charlotte can have mine (which at least has not been smoked in daily and hourly), and we shall be as snug as possible—if Miss Skinner will be propitious.

The anticipation did me a deal of good; and helped to support me through a rather dreary and disappointing

Christmas, which, I am bound to say my first at Ruthieston was.

I had never of course spent a Christmas in the north before. I knew the day was not observed amongst the Presbyterians as with us; although a growing reverence for it is amongst the signs of the times, and one for which all Christians must surely be thankful. It had not made much way at Ruthieston at this time. I had done what I could to call my own flock together in a suitable frame of mind. The Miss Glens and a few other young people helped to decorate the church, I doing a good deal myself: and I also bought some red and blue pigments at the carpenter's shop, and painted a text to hang above the altar; for the adornment of which I had got some glass vases, to do temporary duty till better could be procured. I had poor Hill's wooden cross, which for some time had been restored to its place, gilded, which was certainly an improvement. The church looked, on the whole, better than I had ever seen it. I gave notice of two celebrations, and altogether did my best to keep the festival in a becoming manner. But when I went out in the morning and saw the people going about their work as usual, the children trudging to school, the open shops, and the universal total disregard of the day, I felt, I must confess, a sensation of indignation and bitterness. I think an innocent schoolboy, swinging his strap of books almost in my face, brought home to me more than anything else the sensation of being in a "strange land."

My congregation was larger than I expected, however: certain of my Presbyterian neighbours having dropped in, besides all the Church-people within reach. But the impression of the outside world left its mark upon me; and I could not help adding some extempore improvements to my written sermon. I should have felt a craven if I had not lifted up my little voice as a witness, however feeble, against the desecration round me. I am wrong, though, to speak of desecration. These poor people had never been taught to regard the day, and therefore, in a certain sense, "to the Lord they regarded it not;" that is, they went on with the duties of their daily life, in the station wherein He had placed them, and were conscious of no harm. But I felt—and from the depths of my heart I said it—that in this non-observance of one of the greatest of Christian feasts, the Presbyterian stands aloof, even from other sects of Protestant dissenters. When, as I told them—and there was a bitter ring in my voice, I know it, though a little after I blamed myself for it—when, not alone a little despised handful of Christians like ourselves, but the Holy Catholic Church in all lands, was keeping with glad song and holy rite the feast of the Redeemer's Nativity, the Presbyterian passes by to his farm or his merchandize, as though it were nothing to him. Was it not almost as if he thought that the birth of a Redeemer concerned him not?

I did not write these words. They were spoken on

the spur of the moment ; and I know they were unwise. But I said them nevertheless.

Next morning saw me the happy recipient, through the post, of a letter from Major Glen, all directed, I found, at my unfortunate sermon, and taking me to task for it in the strongest terms. I need not copy it out *verbatim*. What business had I, he asked, to level such hard, uncharitable, uncalled-for, accusations against my neighbours and fellow-Christians—people in all respects as good as, if not better, than myself? What did I expect to gain by such a cowardly attack?—and a great deal more in the same strain, winding up by saying that I might consider myself fortunate if no one represented my most mistaken ardour to the Bishop ; and that, on my repetition of the offence, I must by no means expect a like forbearance, as the writer, Major Glen, would certainly not sit patiently under utterances of such a nature from the pulpit of his church.

Well, I read it all ; and after some thought indited a reply, in which I said I was extremely sorry if any expressions I had used had caused offence to any who heard me, but that I did not think they ought, if rightly understood. Further, that, as before, I must decline to enter into argument with Major Glen respecting my views and doctrine. The shorter the better, I felt, in correspondence of the kind.

This done, I endeavoured to put away all unpleasant thoughts, and to apply myself to the more grateful task of preparing for my sister's coming.

Miss Skinner is propitious, and much gratified at the idea of her prospective lady-lodger. Only she was much scandalized, and evidently considered me a most selfish, unchivalrous brother, because I did not give her the larger bed-room across the landing, with the fine view of the street like the sitting-rooms. I was obliged to tell her at last plainly, that on no account would I put any lady into a room, however good, which was saturated with tobacco-reek as that room is. My own clothes and brushes will be bad enough for a long time to come, when I inhabit poor Joseph Macaldowie's former den.

The weather being "open," it is proposed that Charlotte should land, in the first place, at Edinburgh, and that I should take a clergyman's week to meet her there, and take her to see some of the lions of the Scottish metropolis, which I had never seen.

Accordingly, on the second day of the new year, I set off for this purpose in great spirits.

It would not be of general interest to dwell on so merely personal a matter as my great satisfaction in meeting my sister. Charlotte has been my good genius all my life—since the day when, at four years old, I tumbled into the garden tank, and she, at six, held my head and arms above water, till I was rescued by a stronger hand.

She arrived in good health and spirits, for she has long desired a visit to Scotland; and she knows my



parish almost as well as I know it myself already, from description.

We lodged at the quietest hotel we could find, and spent our time in "doing" the sights of the place. All the churches (including the new Cathedral), the Castle, Holyrood Palace, Queen Mary's chamber, Rizzio's blood, and all the rest of it. And, having a spare wet afternoon, we looked into the Winter Exhibition of the Scottish Academy; at which a little incident occurred which had a greater significance later.

A small oblong picture, hung just above "the line," caught my eye, as we passed along. It represented, apparently, two men in fanciful ancient costumes, walking side by side across a sandy desert, with a sunset sky behind them; but the face of one figure was so exactly that of Joseph Macaldowie, that I was positively startled. Either it was a most extraordinary chance resemblance, or——

"Let's have a look at the catalogue, Lottie. What's No. 44?"

"No. 44," says my sister, calmly glancing down the page. "'Tobias and Raphael—Miss S. Hall.' Why, is that the Miss Hall you told me about? She must be very clever."

Had she made the fellow sit to her? was the absurd thought that passed through my mind. Yes; the picture was undoubtedly good. Poor Selina must inherit her father's talent in no small degree. I looked again more critically. Upon a background of yellow

sunset the two figures, pre-Raphaelite in style, stood out boldly. Tobias was represented as a young man of slender figure, with a pale, attenuated visage, and great wistful eyes raised searchingly to the face of his companion; and that face was my young friend's in every line, even to the parting of his hair, only slightly conventionalized—the dark-fringed eyelids, and the incipient bronze beard just marking the outline of the face. He was dressed in a sort of dusky green cassock, with a deep red mantle over the shoulders; behind which the angel wings were just visible in a kind of transparent tracery, not supposed to be apparent to the fellow-traveller, to whom he was simply "brother Azarias." It was a curious conception: I felt inclined to laugh; and yet there was a certain pathos about it, and I could not help fearing the foolish girl had painted some of her heart into her picture, whether consciously or no. If she had not painted from the model, it must have surely been present to her mind's vision.

Charlotte did laugh when I explained it to her, but allowed that my secretary and treasurer must be a dangerous young man if he resembled St. Raphael.

"And his intended is about the plainest girl you ever saw," I said.

"But does this—this Miss Hall really care for him?"

"I could not undertake to say. I have no doubt she—or her friends for her—care for his father's money; and she is artist enough to admire his face. But as he does not care a pin for her, it is little odds."

## CHAPTER XIV.

WE came home on the Saturday, and Charlotte is now fairly installed in her new quarters.

She is quite happy here, and gratified with Miss Skinner's endeavours to make her comfortable. She admires my church too : thinks it is capable of being made very nice ; and looks forward to helping me by and by with a Sunday school and choir-class. She has called on the Glens ; and I introduced her to the Lindsays' party on the Sunday. They were all very cordial and civil ; but a fresh heavy fall of snow has prevented any continuation of civilities so far.

Charlotte professes to enjoy a good snow-storm. She has bought a pair of Wellington goloshes at the local shoemaker's, and tramps about bravely with me. We are beginning to collect by degrees various articles of furniture ; also a good deal of linen, which keeps her busy hemming and marking, in which she has enlisted the assistance of Tibbie, who is glad to do a little in the long evenings.

Poor Tibbie is the only one of our *ménage* who does

not look very bright. Joseph has not been out to see her since Christmas week ; and now that the house is full, of course he must seek another lodging when he does return. I think she is a little jealous of my occupation of his former sanctum.

But one day, in the beginning of February, a regular storm broke over the household.

Charlotte and I were coming in from a walk, when in the Post Office Miss Skinner waylaid me with the request to have a word with me alone, in her own room.

She was in a terrible state of excitement ; and as soon as the door was shut behind me she began :

"I beg your pardon for troubling you, Mr. Wingate, but I believe ye'll be into the most of Joseph Macaldowie's secrets, and ye'll maybe be able to ken if this that we've haird's truth or fa'shood."

"I've heard nothing of Macaldowie," I said.

"Ye havena? Well. Ye maybe ken what wye Joseph Maca'd'wie's been wi' us, a' the time mostly that he's stoppit oot here—hoo that he's been alloo'ed in my parlour mornin' noon and night, like as tho' he were one o' us—hoo that he's cairried on wi' my niece, Tibbie, singin' wi' her, and lendin' o' her books, and turnin' o' her to his ain kirk, an' awa' fra' the releegion o' her ain fowk, which is nae gweed eneuch for him, maybe—beggin' yer pardon, Mr. Wingate, sin' ye're an English minister, but I sanna say but ye've keepit to yer ain wark, and nae troublit hiz \*"

\* hiz, us.

waxed broader and broader in her excitement). "And there's been an oncarry, a'togither, that I would niver ha' coontenanced had I not believed them contrackit to be man and wife; and I'm sure when he was ill yon time, afore you was here, sir, wi' the closin' in's thro't, which the doctor said was threetenin' diphtheria—if Tibbie hadna notticed him like a mother—and if she was up and doon once in the day she was twenty times, till her fit was sair wi' gaen upon the stair—an' noo to turn roon'!"—(the old woman paused at last for breath.

"But what—what has he done now?" I cried.

"What done! Why, it's all aboot hoo he's to be mairried to Miss Hall, and it's just made up, and his father's awful pleased, and to give him half shares in the consairn—and—"

"Who says so?" I broke in.

"Them that should ken. Mrs. Rennie's Maggie has been out here a message to the Lilacs, and seein' her ain sweethairt at the station, and she cam' here full o't. Hoo that the twa o' them—Joseph and his father,—and yon Mr. Fyffe, was never oot o' Mrs. Rennie's—and sic a lot of music-parties and that; and first she thocht it was Mr. Fyffe, for that he was mad set upo' the crater, wi' her peeana-playin' and paintin' an' her tow-heid; but it's just Joseph that *she* prefairs, and Mrs. Rennie's to give her three hundred poonds upo' her mairrage day, and to leave her a' thing!"

"What does Miss Sellar think? Does she believe it?"

"Losh! dinna ask me what Miss Sellar thinks! The first word o't she burstit and cried, and ran awa' to the back o' the hoose, and there she's been greetin' hersel' deen ever since, and left me to be deein' wi' the weeres" (wires) "the best wye I could; and if Glenforth's butler didna come in that meenit wi' a telegram to send for's Lordship, and me jist shakin'!"

"Has he never written to her?"

"Not he; nor been to see her sin' Christenmas."

"The scoundrel!" I muttered between my teeth.

"Ay, ay; awat he's a scoon'rel, if things is the wye I take it."

I stood silent for a few moments, too much distressed and disappointed to speak, and Miss Skinner went on:

"I'm sure it canna be cast up to her that she ran after him, or was seeking him at a', without he soucht her first. But her hairt's just broken, for I ken what way it was set upo' him. And she's nae a licht or a bonnie girl, that ilka yoong man that drops intil the Post Office must have his crack wi'. She never had a sweethairt before. I doubt it's nae her face, peer lassie, that'll get her a man, without he sud could ken hoo smairt she is about her hoose, and what clever and couthie fan a body's ill. Weel-awat it's just been that wi' Joseph. He's reel parteec'lar, and must have every-thing just as correc' and poonctooal—he's like his father for that; but it's his father I doubt's at the bottom of this. Anywye, an' it be so, he disna set fit in my hoose more. My niece is a respectable girl, and

as well brocht up as need be; and she's nae to be ta'en up and set down, for any o' his fine misses with their peeanas and their paintin'!"

"I am excessively sorry; but I can't but hope there is some mistake. I always understood that his affections were given to Miss Sellar, though he told me his father's views were different."

"Ay, I believe that; I just blame his father for't. He's a nasty man, auld Maca'd'wie—a nasty, greedy, grasping, hard" (I wish any written characters would convey the expression of Miss Skinner's '*harrrd*') "kin' o' a man."

I left Miss Skinner, feeling very sad. I talked the matter over with Charlotte; and I could not help feeling that there must be some mistake, or at least that Mrs. Rennie might have some object in spreading the gossip.

I saw nothing of poor Tibbie that night. Next morning she came in with our breakfast as usual, and I could not help, knowing that she was aware of my knowledge of facts, expressing my sorrow for her trouble.

She was quite calm, having evidently "cried herself deen," as her aunt said. She took up the corner of her apron and twisted it between her fingers, but only sighed in answer to my sympathizing words.

"I can't help hoping it may be a false report after all," I said.

"A pairson wouldna know," Tibbie answered. "I've gotten no word from him this while."

"Well, you know, he used to confide in me, and though I promised him not to speak of his affairs, I think it is no breach of confidence to tell you, as I told Miss Skinner, that he always expressed his sincere attachment to you above every one."

"I doubt it's his father," she said very low. "He wouldna like to conter him. He's spoken to me about it at a time. If he had sent me one word—one explanation, I wouldna have felt it so sair."

"It is his utter silence that makes me doubt the story," I said. "But how if you were to write to him yourself?"

She shook her head.

"I'm not willing to write."

"It seems almost fair to give him the chance of clearing it up. Would you like me to write to him, Miss Sellar?"

"If—if *you* please, sir."

"Well, then, I will. Shall I say anything on your part?"

"Say to him—no, no, I *canna* say anything," she said, with a little shudder. "When I know what way it is, I'll tell him he's quit o' me—and I forgive him." The last words were followed by a tearless sob.

"Very well, Miss Sellar; and in the mean time you know where to look for comfort. These trials—that come to us through our fellow-creatures—often seem harder than what is sent directly from Heaven; but we must try and think that it is all the same really. And



trials of *this* kind especially are meant to wean us from earth, and make us lean only on the Love that never fails or will fail us."

So poor Tibbie went her way. I have noticed the expression of her face before; and now I thought I had never seen a more touchingly pathetic face—so quiet and gentle and patient in her trouble.

I sat down at once and indited my letter, as follows :

"DEAR MACALDOWIE,

"A wonderful piece of scandal has been brought out here concerning your approaching marriage in town (I need not say with whom). Poor Miss Sellar is in sad grief, and Miss Skinner is in no frame of mind to hold her tongue; and though I myself can hardly, from what I know of you, fancy the report true, I hope that you will, for your own and your friends' sakes, be able to clear it up satisfactorily as soon as possible.

"I have thought it only fair to write to you, as your friend and clergyman; and also on behalf of Miss Sellar, who naturally feels a delicacy in doing so herself.

"I remain, yours faithfully,

"ROBERT C. WINGATE."

This letter was duly posted. But when two, three, and four days passed on, and no answer came, I could not but feel that things began to look very bad.

Poor Tibbie's face grew paler and sadder every day,

till we could hardly bear to meet her ; and the wistful eyes seemed to be always on the watch for word or sign. At length when a week had passed, she came in as usual in the middle of the day to lay our early dinner. She knew—none better, for had she not sorted every letter herself?—that none had come for me in the well-known hand ; and she looked so weary and ill, that, being alone in the room with her, I said, “This is a long trial of our faith and patience.”

The few words of sympathy were too much. She sat down on the corner of a chair by the door, lifted her apron to her face, and sobbed as I never saw a woman sob before or since.

She was quite beyond me, so I went out and sent my sister to her. I have great faith in Charlotte’s comforting powers, and women understand each other best. They remained together for some time (our dinner being, so to speak, beside the point), and then Charlotte came to my room to tell me poor Tibbie was better, and had gone down-stairs.

“I am *so* sorry for her,” she said ; “she is so nice—so good—though I can’t understand all she says. What *do* you think of it, Bertie ?”

“Well, it is hard to say. I am loth to give up my faith and trust in him.”

“I think poor Tibbie keeps an under-current of faith and trust, though she is very, very unhappy. She is so modest too, so high-minded, that I think the shame of being jilted is almost as great as the pain.”

"If he does jilt her in this way, of course he is an unmitigated scamp. Nice secretary and treasurer for me, eh? Perhaps it is a judgment for having leant on him too much."

"I am so sorry on your account too, Bertie. Poor Tibbie says if she had had one word from him it would not be so sore, as she calls it."

"Yes, that's just it. I cannot help hoping, trusting that he has been away, and never received my letter. It is not like his nature, as far as I know it, to behave in such a disgracefully mean and cruel way. Well, well, it is easy to preach faith and patience to poor Tibbie; we must try and be as patient as she is."

I had become now as thoroughly Tibbie's advocate—as anxious for a happy termination to her engagement—as I had once been disappointed at that engagement. In fact I had been a good deal impressed by Tibbie's good qualities of late, and my sister's opinion likewise influenced me considerably. From their first acquaintance Charlotte had been favourably impressed by our landlady's niece, and—never having yet seen Joseph—was inclined to consider him the fortunate party, in having won the affections of so worthy and good a young woman. We were both agreed in being heartily sorry for her now; and the anxiety with which I watched for the letter that did not come was, I think, hardly less than that of Tibbie herself.

## CHAPTER XV.

LENT began rather early in February. Ash Wednesday was only two days after that on which we had the conversation which I have just noted down; and the preparations for that day's services, and for a suitable observance of the season which follows, diverted our minds somewhat from the painful subject which had been engrossing them.

I intended to add to my daily services during Lent, the Litany at twelve o'clock each day; and tried to make an extra attraction by proposing to give, on Wednesday and Friday evenings, a reading or lecture on some appropriate subject. A few people may, perhaps, drop in of an evening who cannot come in the daytime.

But it was in the afternoon of Ash Wednesday that, taking a little constitutional with my sister before evening service, I saw a figure approaching from the station direction, the sight of which made me rejoice with trembling.

"That is our delinquent himself," I said in a low voice to Charlotte. "Will you walk on that way? I had better speak to him alone first, and find out whether or no he *deserves* to be introduced to you," I added lightly. Charlotte took my suggestion, and I went on and confronted Joseph alone.

He came up to me in his usual open-hearted way, and my first glance at his face was reassuring; but I observed that he was much paler and thinner than when he lived out here, and had a harassed look about him which I had never seen before.

He began at once: "Mr. Wingate, I am come out expressly to see you. I ought to apologize for not replying to your note, but I have only just come back to town—I had been to Liverpool, and then to London, for my father—and was surprised to find that it had been lying, not forwarded. I am quite at a loss, too, to understand to what it refers."

I saw that he was speaking the truth; and taking him aside with me, down a quiet unfrequented street, I explained, as well as I could, the whole matter.

He listened with scarcely restrained indignation, and little exclamations of "Poor Tibbie!" "Poor girl!" and finally, "What an infairnal tissue of lies! I beg your pardon, Mr. Wingate; I never haird the like of it."

"Then you can assure me that it is without foundation?" I said.

"Without foundation! the thing is, Mr. Wingate, that my friend Willie Fyffe is just mad upon Selina,

and the way I went there at all has been just on his account; they were practising trios and such like, and it was anything to get him admitted; but I've not been there above half-a-dozen times. No; my father's in that house a great deal more than I am—I don't know, I'm sure, what it means," he went on in a sort of meditative way to himself, and then paused. "I've told you about my father before. He has told me that if I make a marriage to please him he'll raise my salary immensely; in short, I'm pairfectly independent as far as means go, and so forth; and it appears Miss Hall would please him, if I were marryin' her; but I've told him over and over I'm not for Miss Hall, and so he subjects me to a kind of petty pairsecution, for his own ends. It'll not do, though. I'll do a good deal to please him, but I'll not give up Tibbie."

"But how was it you never wrote, then?"

"Wrote, to Tibbie? Oh, well, we are not very much in the way of writing," he replied, laughing a little. "And besides, I did not know there was anything to write about; and I have had little enough time all winter for writing, I assure you. I would have come out oftener; but my father kept me so terribly close, and was so down upon me if I wanted a day out, that I could not manage it. I must go in to-night by the 4.45, so I'll just away now and put it all right with my poor girl. Good-bye, sir, and thank you very much for the way in which you have acted towards me."

I shook hands with him heartily, and left him to go

and act Huntingtower in his own way, retracing my steps to meet Charlotte; and we continued our walk for a while, both feeling that we were better out of the house while they were having their explanation. When we went back to prepare for evensong, Joseph was gone.

We saw Tibbie, however, as usual at tea-time; and having shared her anxiety so long, I could not help saying,

“Well, so it’s all right now, Miss Sellar.”

“Yes, sir, thank ye, sir.”

“I am so glad, Tibbie,” my sister said, taking the girl’s hand. She had got to the Christian name, you see, or that which stood for it. “I hope all will go prosperously now.”

“I hope so, thank you, Miss Wingate.”

That was all she said; but it was a relief to see her without that sad, searching expression on her face. The relief to myself also was infinite. I began to see that there were adverse influences at work with poor Joseph; and opined that a letter with the Ruthieston postmark might very possibly have been purposely laid aside to await his return at leisure. I felt sorry for him, and more than ever anxious for a happy termination to his and Tibbie’s engagement.

In the third week of Lent there were some Diocesan meetings, and an Ordination, which I went into town to attend. There was also some little business of a more domestic nature to be transacted; and a large sale

of house furniture, at which I wished to be present and to have Charlotte's assistance : consequently she accompanied me for a few days.

When we returned to Miss Skinner's there was a stranger lassie at the telegraph corner, and no appearance of Tibbie.

"Eh, yes, she's away," Miss Skinner said when she greeted us. "Tibbie's away home to get her things to the ro'd for her mairrage."

"What, is it to be so soon?"

"Ay, he's to mairry her gin Easter; I think that's what ye call it," answered Miss Skinner condescendingly.

"Well, I am glad for her sake," said Charlotte; "but we shall miss her very much. And is all put right with Mr. Macaldowie's father?"

"'Deed, Miss Wingate, I dinna know, for I niver askit. Joseph was oot here himself the day you went into the town, needing to talk to her; and I let them have my room to themselves to talk over a' their arrangements and plans and what no; and syne after he was gone Tibbie comes to me very quiet, but as pleased as ye like, and says, 'I'm for away home, auntie, as soon's ye can want me, but I'm no to disconvenient you.' 'Deed, lassie,' I says, 'gin a' thing's made right atween you, I'm right happy to hear't, and I'm nae to think o' mysel', if so be that Missie Wingate and the minister's nae disconveniented.' And so, as it chanced, Mistress Davidson's girl was new come home, and seeking a place, and I just took her as a sort o' trial, and Tibbie just



pat her like into the ways, and she's away till her father's yestreen. Awat ye'll miss her, I'm feeling the miss o' her a'ready ; and it'll be a while, ye know, or the new girl that I've gotten is into the wye of the house, so ye'll perhaps let me know if a' thing's not correct, mem. I doubt I'll not get the like of Tibbie again. Eh, but she was clivver, Tibbie ; eh, but she was smairt ! She'll have a right house till herself when she's mairriët. I doubt Joseph Maca'dowie knew what he was about when he sought Tibbie for's wife."

We quite agreed. It was not long before we "felt the miss" of Tibbie in various ways. The new lassie was a heedless, open-mouthed, good-tempered, grinning creature, but untidy and unmethodical to a degree—"just terrible through-other," Miss Skinner called it. Poor "auntie's" temper used to be sadly tried, and we could overhear great scoldings of the unfortunate lassie for divers domestic misdemeanours ; one day Miss Skinner winding up by calling her "a most *notorious* girl !" And Miss Skinner could not afford now to indulge in her sick headaches of two or three days' duration ; but one evening after the office work was all over she was so poorly and tired, that it ended by Charlotte going down to her room and making her tea and arrowroot, and cossetting her in various ways till she got her to sleep.

The various discomforts which we underwent, added to the worry to poor old "auntie," caused us to press on our arrangements for getting into the parsonage more

than we had at one time intended. The rooms were now quite dry, and we had collected sufficient furniture to inhabit at least some of them. Charlotte had engaged two women-servants with whom she thought we should be able to get on, at any rate for the present. So we packed up our traps and took our final departure from the Post Office rather more than a fortnight before Easter, as we of course wished to be over our move, and quiet, by Passion Sunday at latest.

Miss Skinner professed herself very sorry to lose us, though she agreed it was the best plan for us, as well as for her under the circumstances. She was profuse in her expressions of gratitude, declaring that no lodgers had ever behaved so kindly or so handsomely to her before; Charlotte's good offices having won her heart, I suspect. She made so many declarations of friendship, and offers to do anything in her power at any time to oblige us, that at last I said, jokingly,

"Well, Miss Skinner, I think you had better make haste and come to my church."

She laughed most heartily.

"Na, na, Mr. Wingate; I doubt I'm ower a'ld to cheenge. It's all very well for the like o' Tibbie, that's gettin' a man for't; but I'se wager I'll no get a man, gin I were turnin' the night! Na, na; I'll bide's I am. I havena lifted my lines, sir" (*i. e.* have not been a communicant at any but the same church), "for thirty-three year."

Poor little old faithful "auntie,"—faithful according

to her lights! Surely she, and such as she, will rise up in judgment against the possessors of far higher privileges, who forsake the guides of their youth, and "heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears."

We found our new home very fresh and comfortable and roomy after Miss Skinner's little apartments, and, thanks to Charlotte's housewifery, got on fairly well at first, with two handmaidens, one of whom was of a steady age and considerable experience.

It was a few days after our entry when, one forenoon, as Charlotte and I were unpacking and arranging in my study, and up to our eyes in books, the younger of our maids came in to announce, in the usual Scottish formula, that "that was" Mr. Macaldowie calling to know whether he could see Mr. Wingate.

I desired her to show him up-stairs.

"He will be come on business private and important," said Charlotte. "I shall keep out of the way."

"Very well," I said. "But come in before he goes, for I do really want you to know him."

I went to the partially-furnished drawing-room, and there I found Joseph. After the first few greetings and some expressions of pleasure at finding me in my own house, he said,

"I called to let you know that our marriage day is fixed for Saturday in Easter week, sir; and we would both be very much pleased if you would kindly come and officiate, if it were not too much trouble."

"I should be very glad if I can," I said. "Where is it to be?"

"It'll require to be out at her father's place—just at the farm," he replied.

'Why Joseph, you don't mean to say you are not to be married in church?'

"I'm afraid there's no other way we can arrange it," he said. "You know her friends are all strong Presbyterians, and I don't believe they would go to a church marriage; and I wouldn't like to ask her to come and be married to me without a soul of her own kin to stand by her. More than that, the nearest Episcopal church is nine miles from her father's, so as I don't see how we would get there. And it's only quite recently that Episcopal marriages have been made in the church, you know, sir."

"I did not know, certainly," I said.

"Of course if you object, sir, I'll easily get Mr. Newton or Mr. Fyffe—I know either of them would do it. But you have been so kind to me, and to her both, this while, that I thought I would ask you."

"Oh, no, I do not object, Macaldowie. I am very pleased that you both wish it."

"Thank you, sir. Of course I would prefer the church myself, but I just saw that I would require to give in for once. And sin' *she's* to give up all for me, I may give up something for her."

"Yes. But allow me to say, I hope it will be your first and last concession to the Presbyterians."

"It's all right then. And of course Tibbie will commence and attend the church, once we're married."

"Of course. Well, I'm glad it's settled so far. And your father—has he come round?"

Joseph's face changed at once.

"*Donn't* speak of him," he said, entreatingly. "We *wonn't* speak of him. He said—no, I'll never repeat what he said to me when I told him I'd fixed my marriage day!"

"I am sorry for you. It is sad to begin life without a father's blessing and sanction."

"Yes, I've thought so. I've looked at it every way, and I've made up my mind not to wish for what cannot be had. He'll not break with me altogether," he went on; "he knows better than that. He wouldn't get another partner, or agent either, would work for him as I do. He's taken it out of me this winter, I assure you; and he'll be glad enough to let me go on working, and keep me as short as he can; but I'll stand that. I could do much better for myself if I cut the consairn. I'd get a berth to-morrow in an opposeetion company; but I'll not do that. I don't see that I can be expected to do more for him than I'm doing; but as to marrying, I'll please myself."

"And where are you going to live?"

"Oh, just out here, as before. I've got two little apartments will do fine for Tibbie and me. Auntie would have liked us to stop on with her; but she's got too many rooms, and if we didn't take all we'd spoil the

letting. No, we're just down beside my office, in Well Street."

"And have you come to stay here now?"

"No; I go back to town till the day."

"I am sorry. I hoped to have had your help at Easter in one or two things, and before it. But I suppose you will be as well, or better off, for services in town. By the by, what services did Hill give on Good Friday?"

"He had them divided into three—at eleven, three, and five. You see, being a busy day with many people, they cannot attend except late or early. I believe the gentry come pretty well, but being obliged to be in town myself, I cannot positively say."

"What, can you not get a holiday then?"

"Well, you see, sir, Friday's market-day, and either my father or I *must* attend it."

"Is it possible?" I said, quite scandalized. "A market on Good Friday!"

"Well, sir, I am sorry to say the Presbyterians do not observe the day. You are not accustomed to our ways, and of course it strikes you differently to what it would us, who have been brought up here."

"I hope I shall never look at it in any other light than as a fearful desecration," I said; for indeed the idea was horrible to me. I had seen the market-place in town once or twice. And a market on Good Friday! Buying and selling, haggling and quarrelling, swearing and whiskey-drinking, through those three awful

Hours so sacred to all time ! And this in a Christian land and a Christian town—and Churchmen were to be engaged in it ! I could say no more.

“ You know, Mr. Wingate, they are not conscious of harm,” my companion said. “ And in England, if I remember, where the day is observed, I have seen a good deal of desecration of one sort or another.”

“ Well, yes ; I cannot deny it. But at any rate no one is *obliged* to join that.”

“ I hope you will have a good congregation here, sir. People are beginning to return. Mrs. Rennie is coming home next week, I understand.”

“ Ah ! is she ? and poor Miss Hall ? ”

“ Oh, yes. I hope things will go smoother for Willie Fyffe, by and by,” he said, with a little smile. “ Poor fellow, he’s *very* hard hit. He’s getting quite—what is it they call it again ?—*æsthetic*, to please her, and sticks his room all full of lilies and sunflowers and peacocks’ feathers. The clerks at the bank call him ‘ Peasie \* Fyffe.’ ”

I could not help a laugh at the idea. And then my sister came in, and I had the satisfaction of introducing her to my friend. He did not stay long after this, having other business in Ruthieston before leaving ; but wished us good-bye, again thanking me for the promise of my good offices on Easter Saturday.

“ What do you think of him, Charlotte ? ” I said, when he was gone.

\* Peasie, the familiar name for a peacock.

"I think he has a peculiar accent—and *very* peculiar eyelashes."

That answer is Charlotte all over. If ever I particularly wish her to be sensible and serious, and give me her candid opinion of anybody, she always pitches on some absurd personal peculiarity, as that the individual's nose is crooked, or eyes don't match, or something of the sort. It is partly to teaze me, and partly because she is very careful of expressing a real opinion till she knows a person well.

"I wonder I ever ask you!" I said.

"I hope he will be kind to Tibbie—that's all."

"I don't think there's much doubt of that."

"And I hope—yes, I really do hope—his wares will have fallen before I have to order any more of them! Do you know, Bertie, in the 'Journal' to-day they are actually twenty-three shillings a ton!"



## CHAPTER XVI.

My Holy Week and Easter services were on the whole, perhaps, less disappointing than I anticipated.

I was quite pleased by the way in which my congregation mustered on Good Friday; and, as we came from church, Charlotte observed to me that really, though the people were all at work and the shops open, the place was much quieter than many an English village or country town on Good Friday; and that she thought it less jarring to see it so than a great deal of merry-making and holiday-seeking.

Perhaps it was having my sister with me that made my Easter altogether so much less melancholy than my Christmas had been. It was a cold, bleak season. There were positively no flowers out for decorating, except a few from the Lindsays' greenhouse, and a geranium or two from Mrs. Rennie. That lady had come home on Wednesday before Easter, and attended the daily services regularly, as did also her companion. She was very civil—quite *empressée*—in her reception of Charlotte; but Miss Hall avoided us both, and I never saw her but in church.

I endeavoured to avoid arousing Major Glen's indignation in my sermons this time, without waiving my own convictions in the least. I am getting rather tired of Major Glen. He won't pay his subscriptions: still worse, he won't pay his seat rent without an amount of dunning which I cannot bring myself to inflict; and my secretary and treasurer being an absentee just now, I am obliged to wait patiently for a sum which (I am speaking of the seat rent, which is part of my maintenance) would be very acceptable to me. But I shall be all right when Joseph is settled down here.

And so the days drew on to Joseph's wedding-day. As the event was the most interesting one altogether to me at that time, having thought much of both the young people through many weeks of late, I may be excused for noting down particulars regarding it somewhat in detail.

That Saturday was a bright one, though cold. On going to the station to meet the train from town which was to take me northwards to the appointed place, I found the bridegroom and his 'best man,' Willie Fyffe, in a compartment by themselves, and evidently on the look out for me: so I joined them.

Mr. Fyffe was very well dressed, and in good spirits. Naturally, he would regard Joseph's marriage as the removal of a dangerous though unintentional rival in the good graces of his own adored one. Joseph himself looked well and handsome, but rather subdued. After

the train was in motion he drew from his pocket a letter which he offered me to read.

"I just received it this morning," he said. "I thought it was so kind of him to manage that I should."

The letter was in the hand which I had seen on a former occasion, but traced unsteadily, as if from weakness; and bore the appearance of having been written in short instalments, and at different times. As far as I remember, it ran as follows :

"MY DEAR JOSEPH,

"You will see by the date of this that I am beginning in good time; but I am able to write so very little continuously now, that if I do not, you will not receive my few words of congratulation on your marriage day, as I wish. You will believe how very earnestly I shall pray for you that the day may be the beginning to you of a life of much happiness and peace, and a true union here, to be perfected hereafter among the saints.

"With regard to what you mention, as to having chosen a wife of Presbyterian family, I might once have felt disappointed, as you say Mr. Wingate was at first; but I think I can now take a larger view of many things than I formerly did. If you have found in the young lady all the other qualities which you desire in a wife, and she is, besides, willing to give up the faith and worship of her childhood for yours, *without any reserve*, I think you may consider yourself fortunate. I

am of course assuming that hers is a *real* conversion—not a *mere blind following of you for love's sake or form's sake*, but a conscientious conversion that can stand alone: so, I mean, that if in the ordering of Almighty love and wisdom you were taken away from her head, she would remain steadfast in the faith, and bring up your children in the same.

"You will not be offended at this suggestion coming from me. It will do you no harm to be reminded of death, even on your wedding morning; though I pray that in the providence of God he may be far from you for many years to come.

"An old college friend of mine—a brother priest—is living near me at present, which is a great comfort to me. I have asked him to celebrate for me on Easter Saturday: I need not tell you what, if I am spared, will be the special intention of my communion.

"That all best blessings for time and eternity—all the true joy and comfort of the 'great mystery,' a union in the Lord—may be yours and hers whom you are to make one with you, is the earnest prayer of

"Your affectionate friend in our Lord,

"HORACE HILL."

"P.S. You should receive, about the day, a little book of devotion in which I have put your name, as a small remembrance of our friendship.

"H. H."

I felt, as on a former occasion, quite humbled when I

had read this letter. The writer seemed to express exactly what I had felt, but had been unable to put into the right words. I marvelled how such a man could ever have been unpopular. Still, I could understand that, as he himself inferred, the discipline of long illness and preparation for death would cause his views to be wider and more charitable, without losing one tittle of their orthodoxy.

I don't think we conversed much on the journey down. Three-quarters of an hour's slow travelling—for the trains do dawdle so on this line, and stopping at every little station, never get up steam enough for a good run—brought us to our landing-point. Here we found a gig, provided by Mr. Sellar, awaiting us; and taking our seats, were driven off by a boy, behind a strong but slow-paced heavy brown horse.

After driving through some miles of cultivated open country, we drew up at last at a spacious stone-built farm steading, with long cart-sheds and slated byres, as they call the cattle-houses here. The dwelling-house stood a little in front and to one side of these, and was about the size of an ordinary English cottage of two stories: all built of the same gray stone of the country, and with a well-kept square garden in front and around it. A little stream ran below the farm, and a few trees, principally ash, sheltered it from the north and east winds.

A number of men in holiday attire were standing about the house door and in the garden; and presently

our host himself came out. He was a broad, thick-set, dark-haired man, about fifty, and I saw at once whence Tibbie inherited her plain features; but there was a certain honest kindliness in his face, and an intelligence in his keen eyes, which made the face not an unpleasing one. He was got up evidently in his very best, and in consequence looked less to advantage than he would have done in plainer garments; especially as he betrayed a certain consciousness of his fine broadcloth and light waistcoat, as if he were not at home therein.

On my being introduced to him he received me with a most courteous bow, and then a friendly hand-shake; and I am bound to say that not the best born gentleman in the land could have displayed a more natural and easy civility to a stranger than did Mr. Sellar of Balwhinnie, as he led me into his house. The place seemed literally swarming with wedding guests; even in the passage one encountered figures; and the best room of the house contained quite an assemblage of ladies in gorgeous array. We were presently greeted by Mrs. Sellar, Tibbie's stepmother; a buxom matron who might be between thirty and forty, with a very high colour, bright eyes, and a beaming smile, most resplendent in a rustling dark-green silk dress and much conspicuous jewellery. Of the bride we saw no signs as yet. She was no doubt undergoing much decoration at the hands of her maidens; but after waiting some time, during which refreshment of various kinds had been pressed upon us by the hospitable

entertainers, she emerged from an inner room in all her splendour.

I felt quite sorry for poor Tibbie. She looked very warm and nervous; and her bridal array was more trying than becoming to her homely face and the figure that was apt to look all elbows and angles. She was dressed in a plum-coloured silk—a useful colour, and the dress would stand her in good stead, doubtless, for a long time, as her Sunday best; but it was trimmed with a great many white satin bows and streamers, which, as against the dark silk, had a somewhat glaring effect. A good deal of yellow lace adorned the front, with abundant cuffs of the same around her big Scotch wrists, and tight white kid gloves on her honest hard-working hands. On her head was an orange-flower wreath—a real good substantial wreath, none of your ‘sprays,’ but nearly as big as a bonnet—and a long tulle veil crowned all. She was attended by some four or five maidens, all with very rosy cheeks and gay dresses; but having described the bride’s, I will not attempt to detail theirs. Indeed, I was too much occupied with my coming share in events to think of much besides. I was, I must confess, a little nervous myself. I had never performed a ‘drawing-room wedding,’ though I had often been called to a private baptism, and I felt a most unseemly dread of saying “Name this child” when I ought to be asking other questions. And then I suddenly recollected that I had omitted to ask the bride’s full name: that I had never

heard her called anything but Tibbie; and I could not for the life of me remember, if I ever knew, what Tibbie stood for; so I had nothing for it but to get hold of the bridegroom and ask him.

Isabella Duthie is Tibbie's baptismal name, I am told. This weighty point settled, I am assisted to vest by Willie Fyffe. I had no idea of 'conceding' to the extent of performing the ceremony in plain clothes; but had brought my cassock, surplice, hood, and a reversible red and white stole which Charlotte had lately embroidered for me, and which, having been inaugurated at Easter, I brought to do special honour to Joseph's wedding.

And now we try to get ourselves into something like shape. There are two arm-chairs kindly placed for the bride and bridegroom, which they won't want. There is a little table, which I suppose must do duty for the altar, and a Bible. I have my office-book, of course; and I hope Joseph has the ring—that's all. I don't know what Presbyterians do with the ring. Some of the party are looking at me as if they thought I had become transmogrified into the Pope himself. I try to help Tibbie to get into her proper place; and now at last we are ready to begin.

It seemed to me curious to speak of 'this congregation;' but they were very quiet, reverent, and orderly—some of the junior branches of the Sellar family only peeping and grinning a little when it came to the joining and loosing of hands. I must say that I never



heard an English bride, either high or lowly, repeat her vows better than did poor Tibbie Sellar. There was a distinct, honest earnestness about her 'love, cherish, and obey,' as if her whole heart were in the words, and the offering of her entire life's devotion were being laid at the feet of her young bridegroom.

It was all well over at last; and then followed a kissing all round of the bride, who, I should think, must have been thankful when it came to the end. Then the guests all sat down to a first-rate entertainment in the big farm-kitchen, laid out in great style. It was to be followed by a dance in the barn; but neither I nor Willie Fyffe wished to remain longer than necessary, as we were returning by the afternoon train.

So, after we had seen the bride and bridegroom sent away, amidst a good deal of noisy hilarity, and the firing of one or two old pistols, we paid our adieus to our host and hostess, and departed : Mr. Sellar insisting on sending us down in the gig.

I had asked Willie Fyffe to supper and a bed at the parsonage. I have taken a liking to this same Willie Fyffe. He seems a downright honest, plain sort of a fellow; only he *must* be a little bit of a fool to be cultivating the æsthetic for Selina Hall. However, that is no affair of mine.

"I'm glad poor Joe Macaldowie's happy at last," he observed to me, as we steamed homewards. "She'll make him no end of a good wife."

"Yes, I think she will," I replied.

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"And it is inconceivable the aversion his father has taken at her—without ever having seen the girl, or at least not more than just by chance in the Post Office."

"He must be a curious man, the father."

"Ay is he—a very curious man."

"Yet he's a good Churchman, I've been told."

"Very good. Very strict. He's a useful man to our clergyman, Mr. Newton. I think it's more in his own family, just, that he is peculiar. People who recollect him say that he is very much changed since his wife died—Joe's mother. She had a great deal of influence over him. But now there's few can lead him, and none can drive."

"It is an uncomfortable thing for his son."

"Ay is it. Poor Joe's had a bad winter of it. He's detairmined, ye see; and old Macaldowie is detairmined; and I warrant he's made it hot for him. He's just kept him hard at work all winter: sending him about too—Glasgow, Liverpool, London; and wherever there was anything unpleasant to be done, he was to do it. And then, always the same pressure upon him to make him give up this girl and look higher. It's as well for me" (Willie Fyffe's pink colour deepened) "that he didn't, for he's such a good-looking rascal, and can be so agreeable when he chooses, that—that—others would have no chance. But—and there's no harm me saying so, when things are all going right so far—Tibbie Sellar would need to be kind to him, for it's not every fella would have stood what he has, and kept true to her—

and she not much to look at, though old Balwhinnie has come down pretty handsome, considering he's got such a large young family by his second wife."

It was not late in the afternoon when we got back to Ruthieston; and being a lovely, bright, calm evening—in this part of the country the evening is often the finest part of the day in April—I proposed a walk by the banks of Ruthie, to freshen ourselves up after the closeness and dust of the trip by train.

Willie Fyffe was pleased at the suggestion; and accordingly we bent our steps towards a pretty and secluded walk, following the bends of the burn—Englishmen would call it a river, for size, depth, and trout-bearing properties—in its course towards the Glenforth woods, where it loses its name and its identity in a larger stream. The water was in beautiful order, and Fyffe kept on wishing for his rod and line.

"Joe and I used to fish all this water some years ago, when I stopped out here," he said. "There's not a nicer bit for trout in the whole place."

We had just reached the edge of the wood, where the trees almost overarched the burn. There was an enclosure and stile; but the burn-side walk was supposed to be allowed to be used by the public, and I do not think the people of Ruthieston abused the privilege.

Turning a corner, we saw, a little in advance of us, the figure of a lady sauntering slowly along, whom we both at once recognized as Miss Hall. I saw that my companion immediately became lost to everything else;

and surmising that he would be glad to profit by the chance meeting, without the intrusion of a third party, I told him to go on, and I would sit down by the dyke and watch the trouts rising. Nothing loth, he went quickly on, and both he and the young lady became lost to my view for a short space; but I had hardly taken up my position when a loud hallo for help reached my ear, mingled with screams in another voice. I ran instantly on, to the spot whence the cries proceeded, turned another corner of the bank, and this was what I saw.

A female figure in long flowing garments lying in the stream, struggling, flapping, battling with the water: Willie Fyffe with his coat and waistcoat off, in the act of proceeding to the rescue.

I was preparing to do the same, but he stopped me imperiously.

"No, don't you come in; you don't know the water, and if you get into a hole you're done for. Stand on the bank ready to give me a hand."

I obeyed, watching him as he stepped carefully into the stream with the firm cautious tread of a practised wader. The water was not much above his knees, but the stream was strong and rapid at this part, and the bottom treacherous—consequently it was not the easiest thing possible to raise the long, struggling form encumbered with a heavy wet ulster; but with strenuous exertion Fyffe managed to get his arm round her waist, and, staggering under a height greater than his own by

many inches, half dragged, half supported her to the bank, where he was glad enough to grasp my arm, I holding by the bough of a tree; and then between us we contrived to lift out the unfortunate young lady.

She was not unconscious, but almost exhausted, with a tendency to hysterics. She gasped and sobbed inarticulately, half-choked for some minutes. Poor Willie Fyffe, with his nether garments grievously sodden and stained, and his face almost purple from his exertions, knelt down, and raising her head, tried with a dry handkerchief from his coat pocket gently to wipe her face and rinse the "lint-white locks," which now hung lank and discoloured with water around her cheeks and neck. I helped as best I could, when, seeing me bending over her, the poor girl gasped forth :

"Am I safe? Did you—take me out?"

"It was I—I, dear, dearest Miss Hall! You know me, don't you?—Willie. It was I who have had that great, great joy. I wish the risk had been tenfold—to show my—my—my intense devotion," stammered Fyffe, trying to make her look at him; but she turned away, shuddering.

"Don't—don't speak to me. Mr. Wingate, am I saved? I—I *meant it*; but I got so frightened! Oh, the water—don't, don't let it come up—don't let it carry me away—I am so—so frightened!"

She clung, shuddering again all over, to me, very much to poor Willie's annoyance, even then. Some-

thing like a shudder passed through me at her words, and I began to fear for her reason.

"Look here, Fyffe," I said, "she will catch her death if she lies here, soaked—and so will you. I am almost dry. Put on your things and run as hard as you can to Mrs. Rennie, and tell her to send the pony-carriage as near as they can come, sharp; and then go straight on to the Parsonage and make my sister give you dry things and some hot tea. Yes, go," I said, as he lingered tenderly. "Don't you see it's no time for this sort of thing? she's far too upset, and you distress her. Go, like a good fellow, and I'll get her to walk to the carriage in no time."

So he went; and I remained with perhaps the most awkward and distressing charge that ever fell to my lot. Poor Selina was trembling in every limb now, and ever and anon clinging to me wildly; but at last I coaxed her into making the effort to rise to her feet, and leaning on my arm, to stagger slowly and heavily along the path.

"Am I safe, Mr. Wingate?" she kept saying, looking nervously at the water. "Shall I fall in again—my head swims. Will God *let* me be rescued?"

"He *has* let you be rescued, my dear Miss Hall. You must thank Him, and take courage."

"I felt, oh, so wicked!" she said presently. "Don't let Mrs. Rennie know, though, for your life; she'll say I'm mad—she can never keep anything to herself—and she'll tell every one I'm mad, and send me away

somewhere. And I'm not mad, only—most intensely miserable !”

“ I am very sorry to hear it. But this—this merciful rescue will surely prove to you that a loving Providence is watching over you still ?”

“ What have you been doing to-day, Mr. Wingate ?” she said, turning her wan white face and great sad eyes on me. “ Do you know ? you have married him—chained him for life to that low, wicked girl, who stole away his heart from me, and forced him to marry her !”

“ Miss Hall, I don't think you know of what you are speaking. Mrs. Joseph Macaldowie is neither low nor wicked, nor has she stolen away any one's heart. Her husband and she have loved one another from their first acquaintance almost, with the pure, faithful love of a Christian man and maiden.”

“ Ah ! you think so. You have heard her side, and you believe it. No persons are so imposed on as the clergy.”

A most uncomfortable statement for me to hear. I may be forgiven for hoping it was slightly hyperbolic.

“ And his life,” she went on, “ his life, which might have been so beautiful, so distinct, so exalted, with a congenial companion, is to be dragged down—down to the level of this low, vulgar, common-minded creature. Oh ! it is quite too utterly dreadful ! It is enough to make one mad to think of. I have been so wretched all day ! Mrs. Rennie has been going on about it—fretting, fretting one—you know her way. And at last I came

out to try and cool my head, it throbbed so. And the river looked cold, and kind, and soothing—it tempted me. I thought it would just float me on—down, down, down—and that I should forget everything, and be happy! I never knew the water was so strong and cruel. Oh, it was awful! I thought I was gone, and none near me.”

“I do not wonder you were frightened. You were trying to commit the greatest crime, if consciously committed—except taking the life of another—that a human being—a Christian—can commit.”

“I didn’t think of that,” she said, simply enough. “I only wanted to sleep and forget.”

“No; I believe—I trust you did not realize what you were doing! But now that this signal mercy has been shown you, let me beg of you to think seriously over your sinful, restless impatience, and to repent and seek forgiveness.”

I could not say more then; for in the road, which we had nearly reached, I saw the pony-carriage, and in it Mrs. Rennie, who hastened to meet us in the most demonstrative state of perturbation; and to her (not too judicious) care I surrendered the poor foolish creature who had so nearly given a most shocking and fatal association to Joseph Macaldowie’s wedding-day.



## CHAPTER XVII.

WHEN I returned to the parsonage I found Willie Fyffe outwardly pretty comfortable, having been supplied by Charlotte with divers articles of dry clothing belonging to me, and which gave him a semi-clerical appearance. He was, however, in a great state of anxiety as to Miss Hall; and, as soon as I had drunk the tea Charlotte insisted on, he begged to have a few words with me alone.

I took him to my study, and there he began at once : " Now tell me your candid opinion, Mr. Wingate : is there—is there anything wrong with her here ? " touching his forehead.

" Well, no ; I trust—I think not. I think she is only very excited and hysterical and dramatic. But she has had a thorough fright, and I don't think she will try acting Ophelia again."

" But what—how did she fall in ? "

" Well, you were nearest. You ought to know."

" I *don't* know, indeed," said Willie, almost crying. " She went round the bank and I lost her. I don't

think she had seen me ; and all at once I heard the great scream. Oh ! what thankful I was that I had gone on ! ”

“ Yes ; it was indeed providential.”

“ But tell me—what did she say to you, Mr. Wingate ? ”

“ Indeed, Fyffe, I shouldn’t feel at liberty to repeat all a poor excited girl said in a state of nervous hysterics. No ; you need not be the least apprehensive,” I said, half smiling at his puzzled, suspicious look. “ There was never any love lost between us.”

“ But about this—tell me this one thing. Do you think the event of to-day had anything in connection with—with *this* ? ”

“ Well, perhaps, yes. She seems to have taken it very much to heart. In return, tell me, do you know if Joseph has been giving her any encouragement this winter ? ”

“ He ? Eh, fy no ; Joe’s all square. If he went there it was really to help me. We were practisin’ trios. His father was in often enough, and people *say*—I don’t know I’m sure whether it be the case or no—he’s looking after Mrs. Rennie.”

“ Is it possible ? ”

“ Not that *impossible*. He’s a fine-lookin’ old fellow, old Macaldowie, and very gentlemanly, forbye his money. And Mrs. Rennie, she’s a silly woman—you can talk her into almost anything. She’s got a snug little account at the banker’s too ; and she’ll listen to

any flattery. You can't flatter Miss Hall. No, no ! She's a genius, that girl—a pairfit genius. Eh, how she paints ! You'll have seen her pictures, maybe ? ”

“ I have seen one—at the Exhibition.”

“ Ah ! ‘ Tobias and the Angel,’ was it not ? You know ” (with a little laugh), “ one of the faces was the very likeness of Joe Macaldowie. Some people thought he had sat to her, but that was absurd. He wouldn't have sat if she had asked him. And the other model could not have sat whatever, for he was away. But she says she can draw any face she has studied once from memory.”

“ I did not know there were two portraits in that picture,” I said, as I called to mind the wistful, attenuated countenance given to the young Tobias.

“ Eh, that was Mr. Hill, the clergyman that was here, who went away in consumption.”

“ That was a portrait of Hill, was it ? ”

“ The very same. She'd often noticed them walking together just that way. That was the curious part of it.”

“ So she made the layman the type of the strong angel, the poor weak mortal the priest ! ”

“ Oh, well, it was just her idea of the faces as they suited, not the characters. You see that fellow Joe is so conf—I mean so handsome, and of course that takes with an artist eye. And yet, you know, *he* never could appreciate high art. He's a regular Philistine, Joe—not a bit of cult in him ; you could never imagine him being intense about anything.”

"I should think not," I said. "But, my dear fellow, pray don't adopt that abominable slang, for I for one do not understand it."

My friend was offended. He leant back, stuck his hands into his (or rather my) pockets, and looked altogether as sulky as a fair-faced young fellow can look.

We did not prolong the conversation. It was time for evensong, the hour for which I had lately changed to seven, as it suited myself and others better. But Willie stayed behind; not liking, I suppose, to appear in his ecclesiastical garments.

Next morning he was to be off by the first train; but before he left we both made an early call of inquiry at the Lilacs. The maid told us that Miss Hall had not had a good night, and that she was not to rise; delivering herself of this piece of information with much apparent satisfaction, and a bold stare at Willie Fyffe to see how he took it. I cannot bear that table-maid.

I was really sorry for poor Willie when he went to the train. He looked so utterly down-hearted; and only shook his head mournfully when I told him not to despair. I promised also that I would send him what accounts I could of the young lady's health, as he was unable to come out to inquire; for which he seemed grateful.

I had by no means seen or heard the last of poor Selina: for it followed that the immersion, fright, agitation, and excitement, working on an already overwrought

nervous system, brought on a dangerous illness. The doctor considered that brain-fever was threatening. In her delirium the poor creature so often called for me that Mrs. Rennie sent to desire my presence.

But Selina did not know me. I could only say prayers, hoping that they might soothe and have effect beyond our knowledge. At length after many days the fever subsided, without reaching the crisis that had been apprehended.

It left her weak and wasted almost to a shadow ; but conscious, able to recollect, to think, to feel ; and I was sent for again by her express desire, visiting her many times. Of my ministrations in that sick chamber I must not speak here. Suffice it to say, that I trust they were not altogether without effect ; and that the poor, flighty, mistaken, but warm-hearted imaginative girl rose from the sick-bed whereon her own passionate impatience had placed her with real repentance for past follies, and something like real striving after resignation.

When she was strong enough to travel, I found that Mrs. Rennie had made arrangements for sending her away to England—for complete change, she said. Possibly Mrs. Rennie was acting for the best ; and living on at Ruthieston when Joseph and his wife returned might be too trying for Selina's weakened nerves. But I could not help the idea which possessed me, that Mrs. Rennie wished to shake off poor Selina, partly from fear since what had taken place, partly from

feeling fettered by her presence. A disagreeable impression had been left on my mind by Willie Fyffe's remarks ; and I thought there was something almost of unfeeling haste in the arrangement, of unfeeling satisfaction in having got well rid of her poor companion, in Mrs. Rennie's exultation that Selina had been safely disposed of for the present. Be that as it may, poor Selina disappeared like a pale shadow from the Ruthieston world : for ever out of the life of Joseph Macaldowie.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

MY second summer at Ruthieston promised to be more satisfactory, in some respects, than my first.

Of course the company, co-operation, and sympathy of my sister makes all the difference to me personally. But in outside matters, and as respects my work, things seem looking up a little. As the summer visitors increase, a few drop in at times to the daily services. I have a few *regular* early communicants; and I am beginning to beat up for a confirmation class. I want to have a confirmation in the end of the year. The Bishop will come, I know, whenever I ask him, and am ready; but I should like to have a respectable number of well-prepared candidates, and therefore I do not wish it to be before Advent at least.

Charlotte and I have set up a little Sunday-school, and we find the attendance fairly good, and the children intelligent.

Joseph Macaldowie and his wife have come back to lodgings in Ruthieston, and are to all appearance as happy as a pair of turtledoves. Men of his class do not

always seek for much beauty, or refinement, or intellect in the partners of their lives, though they may appreciate these qualities in the abstract. And the more I saw of the young couple the more I became convinced that Joseph had been wiser than I; that he had done well for himself when he chose the thrifty, industrious, mild-tongued, and home-loving Tibbie. I have mentioned that the young woman is of an accommodating and gentle disposition, which stood her in good stead while living with 'Auntie' Skinner. I think it is not improbable it may stand her in as good stead in her married life. I do not mean but that Joseph is an excellent husband, and sincerely attached to her, but I do think that he shares the determination ascribed to his father; and that any one, either man or woman, to get on well with him, must have learnt the secret of giving way. As regards myself he is extremely agreeable and sympathetic; a capital assistant too. He has extracted the defaulting Major's arrears of subscription, by a system of polite but persistent solicitation impossible to any but a business man; and saves me no end of disagreeables by his activity as secretary and treasurer.

Mrs. Tibbie never 'looks near' the kirk now, and attends St. Peter's regularly. She has also come under regular instruction preparatory to confirmation and what she calls 'coming forward' to Holy Communion. It is curious to hear how she mixes up the Presbyterian formulas of expression, and sometimes engrafts upon



them little phrases which an English person would consider pointedly 'High Church.' She is excessively earnest, though, and very humble and teachable; with a mixture of childlike simplicity and womanly enthusiasm which is very taking. Charlotte reads with her very often; and we lend her books, and visit her at home, which she prefers to joining the class of younger candidates which we are by degrees collecting. One of these is the young railway-clerk, who was formerly in the singing-class. I like him, and should like him still better if he would break off his engagement with Mrs. Rennie's Maggie. She is an Episcopalian of longer standing, and considers herself a match for any of us; but is a most notorious gossip and flirt, and besides, I attribute all the trouble between Joseph and Tibbie some time back to her talk. She is a great friend of her mistress's now; and looks as if she were trying to worm herself into poor Selina's place, so officiously does she put herself forward.

I have two new candidates for confirmation who interest me much—Frank and Ina Reid Douglas. Frank would like to be confirmed here in his Christmas holidays; and Ina, who follows him in most things, has obtained her mother's sanction to doing so in this. Of course their preparation is a private affair. Frank rides down to me occasionally; and once a week I go up to Pitcrichie Castle for an hour in the forenoon (as we always say here), usually have luncheon, and Frank drives me home. Sometimes Charlotte is asked to

luncheon also. She and Ina are becoming great friends, which I think must be from the attraction of opposites ; for Ina, as I have said, is of a yielding nature, whereas my good sister is considered somewhat blunt and uncompromising. Mrs. Reid Douglas is exceedingly kind : a thoroughly good woman, I am sure ; and her charities are boundless. She would be worth anything as lady of the manor in England.

My two pupils and I have long and interesting talks sometimes ; and subjects are started which become a little difficult of treatment. On one occasion we had been talking about schism and its evils ; and came at last to the deduction that if schism were sinful, and Presbyterianism were schism, *ergo*, Presbyterianism was sinful, and the joining in its worship an offence.

I endeavoured to explain to them that the sin lay in the original or subsequently wilful separation from Church ordinances by the instructed ; and that this differs widely from the case of those who, born and brought up in a schismatic body, worshipped God after the faith of their fathers. Gentle Ina here observed that Presbyterianism was the *Established* religion of the country—could it therefore be reckoned schismatic ? I reminded her of the original founding of the Church, and endeavoured to point out, therefore, how the fact of a branch being schismatic or not must be considered in relation to this original foundation, not to the State under which it existed. No State could create a Church, any more than it could annihilate it. For

otherwise the heathen religions of Rome, Corinth, &c., shared the same privilege of State protection and support, and were therefore the authorized religion of the place.

"Well now, Mr. Wingate," said Frank, "do you think that all those—professing Episcopalians I mean—who go to the Established Church now and then are guilty of schism?"

"That is a question almost impossible to answer," I said; "for there are so many different circumstances to be taken into consideration in each particular case, that no one could possibly lay down a rule for all. In many cases it must be left to the conscience of the individual to decide."

"But now for us, Mr. Wingate," Frank said. "Do you think, after we are confirmed, that it will be wrong for Ina and me to go to the kirk sometimes with my mother? Because, you see, it might be awkward for us sometimes, and for *her* especially, when there is no one else going to the chapel."

"I do not think you need distress yourselves about it," I said. "I think if either of you two young people—having made your free choice and your public confession of the Catholic faith—found you were so placed that your not going to the Presbyterian service might be misconstrued, or considered an act of self-sufficiency; if you found that from deference or duty to your mother, or expediency, or anything of the kind, your attendance was desirable, you might go without any

scruples. In your case, you see, there would be no temptation of novelty or curiosity; you have been used to the service from childhood, and going now and then would in no way influence your present belief, I should imagine. But when you, Frank, come of age, and are in a responsible position, I should be inclined to make the difference by giving your personal support and countenance to the Church only."

"That is just what puzzles me," said Frank. "I have known proprietors, born and bred Episcopalians, go now and then to the Established because they thought it a sort of duty to their tenants—'to keep them together,' I have heard one say."

"I grant you that is a puzzler," I said, "and a great mistake. Surely no straightforward Presbyterian could respect that! It is like saying, 'I don't agree with you—in fact, I've been taught to think you are all wrong; but I'm so liberal-minded, such a good fellow, that I'll look in upon you now and then and see how you're getting along,' and so on."

Frank laughed heartily at this.

"Depend upon it," I said, "conscientious consistency is what carries respect and conviction with it in the end; not 'doing at Rome as the Romans do.'"

"But now tell me this, Mr. Wingate. If you were in a place where there was no chapel" (always that 'chapel'), "and nothing but the Presbyterian service to go to, would you go then?"

"Well, as a priest, I think not. As a layman, if, as

you say, there was nothing else, perhaps, as the only form of *common* worship open to me, I might, on occasions. But if I could get two or three to join me, I would prefer, even then, reading part of the Church service to them, to joining the other body."

"But," said Ina, "that would be a layman reading the service still."

"Yes, but only as a *substitute*: not as taking to himself priestly functions. You know, in some parts of Scotland where there is no resident priest, the Bishop authorizes a lay reader. But he cannot absolve, baptize, or celebrate the Eucharist; though in cases of extremity the Church recognizes lay baptism, as I told you when we were speaking of your own," I added; for that subject had come before us, of course, at the beginning of my instructions.

"Then," said Frank, "there is no harm in joining the Presbyterian service, if you look upon it as a layman reading prayers?"

"In one sense, perhaps not. But only from one side, as it were. You must remember that this layman—be he who he may—has taken on himself the office which he exercises: that the congregation which he represents is in opposition to the Catholic Church; and that he has no warrant, beyond the choice and so-called ordination of a few equally self-appointed persons, for the functions which he assumes a right to perform."

"It is difficult to believe," said Ina, "that a person like Dr. Roger, for instance, is in a false position."

"And ought not to be called 'Reverend,' I suppose," said Frank.

"I should be sorry to refuse such a man such a title of courtesy," I said, "though as to his being Reverend in the sense in which such an unworthy person as myself, for instance, may be called so, I cannot allow that he is. You see I am bound to 'magnify my office,' though not myself. When one has once grasped fully the meaning of the apostolic succession, everything else follows. Most of the mistakes people make arise from forgetting or setting aside this starting-point."

"One thing," said Ina, in her low, gentle voice, gentlest of all when approaching argument, "Dr. Roger is such a good, holy man. He is clever, too. He has studied deeply—Hebrew and other languages. How is it that he should not have come to believe in this doctrine?"

"My dear Miss Douglas, you ask a hard question. There are many such, and greater, riddles unsolved. Look at the good and holy and learned of every creed and sect, which yet suffer 'blindness in part.'"

"And are you—we—the only right?"

It was the question—the stumbling-block, one might almost say—of so many humble, charitable souls at all times, and one so often ill-answered or misunderstood!

"Not 'I,' or 'we,'" I said, "but the 'holy Catholic Church throughout the world,' which is the guardian of truth. Certainly I do believe, and am in duty bound to maintain, that the branch in which by God's good

providence I have been placed holds that truth in its most primitive as well as Catholic purity; as it was held in apostolic times and those immediately following, before the Church of CHRIST had been rent and troubled by the thousand-and-one forms of heresy and schism that have grown up since. The whole system of Presbyterianism, you must remember, is only a reaction (going, as reactions generally do, to the opposite extreme) from the corruptions with which the primitive Church had been overlaid in the course of ages. But that Church, here as in England, was also permitted by God's mercy to purify herself of the errors without losing her hold of Catholic truth."

"There, again," said Frank, "so many tell you it is the *English* Church—look upon it as only a sort of importation from the south, and with no hold and no right over the Scotch people."

"Yes, I know. But only those who are ignorant of its history."

"I must say," continued the boy, "that before I had begun to think about it, I was very much of the same opinion. Only some things I heard Mr. Hill and you say in church began to enlighten me a little. In England, you know, nobody ever thinks of explaining it in *that* way. And you go to the English Church—fellows do I know—just because it is the Church of the country, and never think of the reasons for belonging to it."

What an unconscious satire it seemed from the young Scotch laird!

"I grant you it appears so in many cases," I said ; "but I fear that in those cases it is a grave reflection on the parents, the pastors, of those who so act. Of course the Church of England is in a different position to the people from the Church of Scotland here. But every son and daughter of that Church, as well as of ours, ought to be able to give, if need be, a 'reason for the faith that is in him.'"

"Then in few words, Mr. Wingate, our reason is that your Church is the best—I mean the purest in doctrine—and has the—what do you call it?—succession, and so on?"

"Those are the fundamental reasons, of course. But remember, they are not the only ones binding on Scotchmen. No doubt our Church has its failings, its shortcomings, its scandals—every human society must show human imperfections—and we do not cling to it, or join it, *only* because we believe it to be in all points perfect in order and discipline; but because it is our lawful spiritual mother *in this land*—not Romish, but Catholic; not English, but *Scottish*—the branch of the true vine planted here, which neither 'persecution, nor famine, nor sword' have been able to uproot."

I suppose I had warmed with my subject, for Frank looked at me with a smile, saying—

"You are as enthusiastic for the Scottish Church as if you were a Scotchman yourself, instead of an Englishman, Mr. Wingate."

"An Englishman, if you please, but a Catholic



above all things,'” I quoted. “I suppose this is a case where the words may apply. I am afraid you will think I have given you quite a sermon, Frank ; but I must just add,” for I was still afraid Frank’s gentle sister was inclined to shrink from what might have the semblance of arrogant assumption, “that we do not presume to pass judgment on or to condemn those who have been trained to believe otherwise ; but still it is our duty, believing what we do, to hold fast to our faith, and to try, if we may, to win others to the same ; labouring and praying in the spirit of our dear Lord’s last solemn prayer for those that believe on Him, ‘that they all may be one.’”

It was after this conversation that, as Frank was driving me home down the slopes of the hill on which Pitcrichie stood, I could not help, being struck by the beauty and extent of the property, exclaiming—

“This will be a glorious field for you some day, Frank, please God ! I have often thought what splendid opportunities for good a Scottish Churchman who is a large proprietor may have in his power.”

“Do you think so ?” said Frank. “It doesn’t seem to me as if many of them did.”

“No ? Well, my experience is not large. I was only thinking of possibilities. Consistent example, conscientious observance, besides the advantages of money and position and patronage.”

“But we’re bound to support the Established, you know.”

"Yes, to a certain extent, under the present state of things; but there must be so many ways open to you of supporting and aiding the Church and Churchmen, and the influence of example in high places is so great—so often under-estimated."

"I think it's a shame how little some of these big proprietors do," said Frank bluntly, "when they have such lots of money besides. Now, there's McPherson of Colquharrie" (that I find is the spelling of the name; but I can no more pronounce it as Frank does than I can attempt some of the breakjaw South African names); "he's a Roman, you know; and he has built a chapel, all at his own expense, and keeps a priest to do the service. You won't find Episcopalians doing that often; though one or two have, I believe."

"Ah, yes, the Romanists often put us to the blush with their earnestness. They show that their religion is a reality, at least, to them."

"And so do the Free Kirk, I must say. The old Established is a very sleepy affair, compared—yet they hate each other like poison."

I laughed.

"Well, Frank, when you come of age I shall expect to hear of your building a chapel at Pitcrichie, for the benefit of those who live at the top of this long hill."

Frank smiled.

"I shall have to cut down a lot of trees to do that, I'm afraid! And it won't do to injure the property."

"No, no; I shall be very well content if you give your support to St. Peter's!"

Frank was silent for a few moments, then he said :

"I say, Mr. Wingate, isn't your last quarter up soon?—I mean for subscriptions; because Ina and I were thinking we should like to subscribe a little quarterly, now, and if I might give it you."

"My secretary and treasurer will be very pleased to receive anything you can spare us."

"Oh yes, the coal-merchant fellow—I think, as it's so little, you see, if I might give it to you just now"—he pulled a one-pound note out of his pocket. "Ina and I think we could manage ten shillings a quarter each, if you will accept it."

"Accept it!" I said; "I wish every one gave as much that could afford it. I will receive it certainly, if you please, and send you a receipt."

"Thanks; I should prefer it. And look here, Mr. Wingate, we don't want our names in the list, or any humbug of that sort; put 'two members'—or stay, we're not members yet—'anon' will do."

"I should have liked your names," I said, "for example and precedent: but I will do as you wish. And pray thank your sister very much on my part."

"All right, Mr. Wingate. And here we are at the turn to Barnard's, if you are going there, as I think you said."

I was going there; and I took leave of my young friend, feeling greatly cheered by his help and sympathy.

There is much promise in the boy ; and I have great hopes that he may one day be a bright light in his generation, and a pillar of the Scottish Church. It is a privilege for one like me to have any hand in moulding such a character : only it makes one feel one's insufficiency and unworthiness when one meets with such humility. As for Ina——

I was interrupted here, and I do not quite know what I was going to say. I have been to the old Barnards, who are both failing fast. The old man cannot walk to church now : one of the carriages has occasionally given him a lift, but not often. So I have to visit them both. I could hardly bring myself to accept the subscription which the old man offered me to-day for the Council. There is something so exceedingly touching in these poor people subscribing, out of their extreme poverty, to the Church, from which in this world they can expect to benefit but little. And yet how richly blessed may they be in this very "cheerful giving"—so truly "lending unto the Lord !"

Barnard showed me a nice warm greatcoat, which he said 'the young laird' had given him—meaning of course my friend Frank. It was one of his own, left-off, or out-grown ; for Frank would make two of the little old man. I hear, too, that the young ladies are very kind in visiting him. Certainly the old couple are not likely to be allowed to want, with such a patroness as Mrs. Reid Douglas.

## CHAPTER XIX.

AUTUMN has come round once more.

I find I miss Frank Reid Douglas very much, now that his holidays have come to an end. Of course my instructions at Pitcrichie cease in the mean time; but I think I shall have little hesitation in giving Frank a confirmation card in December. Ina meanwhile is carrying on her studies by a course of reading which I have recommended to her; as well as writing answers to some printed questions on some of the most important subjects connected with the work in hand, to be submitted to me later on. I was afraid her attendance at church would be a difficulty now; but fortune has favoured her in the person of her young sister's English governess, who seems an earnest Churchwoman; and so Ina and she drive down pretty regularly in the pony-carriage, while the younger sister, who is a rigid Presbyterian, goes with her mother to Dr. Roger. One would imagine the diversity of religions would cause discomfort and disunion in a family; but in this case, as in several others I have seen, everything seems to go

on as harmoniously as possible, though mother and daughter have agreed to differ. Indeed, the large carriage frequently brings down the whole party, and dropping Ina and Miss Harding at St. Peter's, conveys Mrs. Douglas and little Fanny on to the kirk.

I have been to visit old Mr. and Mrs. Fyffe at Abermurchie—a long promise—and a more congenial old parson and parsoness I never met. The church, too, is perfect—would that I could match it here!—a most reverent and well-trained little choir, Gregorian music, daily service in something more than name. Willie Fyffe was there during part of my visit. I was sorry to see him looking ill and depressed; quite changed, in fact, from what he was. I fear that he is quite unhinged by this affair of Miss Hall's, and her total disappearance from this part of the world. He asked me once, privately, whether I had heard anything of her: to which I could only reply that on inquiry of Mrs. Rennie some time back, she had told me (shortly enough, I might have added) that, oh, yes, Selina was with friends in London, and getting on very well. Mrs. Rennie does not care, I think, that people should inquire too curiously about Selina. She is very often in town herself. And she treats me, and my sister too, so distantly, in short, has drawn back so completely from her professions of friendship, that we do not often come in contact.

The sight of Mr. Fyffe's choir has given the finishing spur to my anxiety to re-model my own, and the

beginning of November saw Charlotte and me at work about it in good earnest. One or two little boys in our Sunday school class are very pleased to be allowed to 'sit with the singers'—at present on a form by the harmonium; but when they are sufficient in numbers and drilling I shall vest them and put them in the chancel.

The commencement of my practising-class led to Miss Glen doing what I suspect she has long contemplated, and I have long desired—*i. e.* retiring from her post. She said she could not possibly undertake to attend the evening classes; so I could only say that my sister was perfectly ready to take them, and that if she practised with the choir, I thought it only right that she should accompany them in church. Whereat Miss Glen said she was very glad; it was often a great inconvenience feeling obliged to be at the harmonium, &c., &c.; and we separated most amicably, after I had thanked her and her sister for their assistance hitherto.

So Charlotte is fairly installed at last in the place where I wished to see her—as harmoniumist; and, I am afraid, principally choir-trainer, so much does her practical musical ability surpass mine. I never leave her to do the work alone; though she is fully capable of it, and our pupils like her teaching much better than mine. I have five little Ruthieston boys; and am promised Archie Lindsay for a sixth on Sundays when he is down. Joseph Macaldowie has come back, also

young Rae, and George Arthur, the railway-clerk; so with myself, that would make four men's voices, and fill up the little stall fairly. I tried more than once to persuade Archie's father to join us; the example would go for so much; but he laughs it off, and says that he can't sing—as if I did not hear him every Sunday! Harry Ferguson, too—he is a fair singer, and has an under current of Church feeling; but he assures me his father would not like him to join the choir. He is a nice fellow, and might be very useful to me if he had half the *stamina* of Joseph Macaldowie, who is still and always my stand-by and sympathizer-in-chief.

So we work away as we best can on Thursday evenings, and have taught the class various simple Gregorian tones, and overcome—thanks to Charlotte—a few bad habits of pronunciation and pointing; and, with the assistance of a few friends, have purchased linen enough to vest our little chorus suitably. We are working hard at the surplices now, and would like to put them on either at the confirmation, or on Christmas day; perhaps most likely the latter.

I did not say that Archie Lindsay has been coming to me three times a week to brush up his Latin and Greek before going to school. This is an advantage to me in more ways than one. I have time indeed, alas! to take more pupils if I could get them. But this bright little fellow running in every other day seems to give a pleasant variety and interest to my daily life. And when lessons are over we go sometimes for a



ramble : sometimes, now that frosts have come, for a skate. I am beginning to look forward to Frank's return, for it is now near the end of November.

One keen frosty forenoon—shall I ever, as long as I live, forget it? Archie's lesson was just over, and he was declaring it to be the most perfect skating day we had had yet. A sprinkling of snow had fallen early, and the street of Ruthieston was in that state that makes travelling unpleasant both for horses and men, as there was an under crust of ice. But few vehicles were abroad, and those that went had their horses' feet sharply roughed, or 'frosted,' as they call it here. Just as Archie and I, skates in hand, went out at my garden-gate leading to the street, we heard a loud rattling and thunder of heavy horse-hoofs at the top of the High Street, and Archie at the same instant cried out :

"Why, I say, Mr. Wingate, that's Macaldowie's cross horse running away."

Macaldowie's 'cross horse' was a character in Ruthieston. He was an immensely powerful Clydesdale belonging to the coal-carters, and was often to be seen with heavy loads of his owners' wares, trudging about between the town and the station. He had a temper of his own, however, and only one man, I had been told by Joseph (for I had often observed the horse, with the name on the lorry, as they call the long four-wheel trucks which carriers use), could manage him at all. He was given to snap or kick at anybody or any horse that approached him too closely; hence the

Lindsay children and some others gave him the designation of 'the cross horse.'

Yes, he was running away, and no mistake. At a tremendous trot, making the harness jingle and rattle all about him, he came down the street. The lorry was empty, but in one corner of it, in danger momentarily of being jolted off, a little child of about seven, the son of the carter probably, was sitting. People ran to their doors to look as the heavy vehicle thundered down. When about the middle of the street, a man ran across at right angles to the horse's path, and seized him by the head. How it happened, I could hardly have told. There seemed a momentary scuffle, and then, whether from the sudden check, the slipperiness of the ground, or both causes, the horse's fore feet went away from him, and he came down upon his side with a heavy crashing fall, the man, still holding by his head, undermost.

In less than a minute a little crowd had gathered around the prostrate animal. I told Archie to keep back, but went forward myself, and my horror at the scene was increased by perceiving Joseph Macaldowie's face just visible above the horse's mane, at hearing his voice of piteous entreaty: "Get him off me! For any sake get him off me!"

Alas! that was not easily affected. The horse lay on his side, held down to a certain extent by the pressure of the shafts: the man lay under horse and shafts and all, in such a position that any effort of the animal

to rise might do infinite mischief. He lay quiet enough now, the great brute ! only now and then making little snaps at any one who attempted to take hold of his head. At last—it seemed an age to us, what it must have been to the poor fellow under the horse I do not like to think—some of the harness was loosened. Some one suggested laying an empty sack in front of the beast, and immediately he was loosened he placed his feet on this and sprang up, while at his first movement the bystanders drew out my poor friend, surrounding him with voluble queries of “Are ye sore hurtit, Josephie?” “Fa’r do ye feel it?” “Are ye able to stand?” &c.

“I doubt I’ve gotten a terrible injury,” said poor Joseph faintly, pressing his hands to his right side. “Wait till I see if I can win to my feet.” But with the effort a deadly pallor came over his face, and he sank down again in a sort of swoon.

It was infinite relief to hear Dr. Grassick’s voice amongst us presently, saying, “Eh ! what’s ado here ? Stand back, lads—give him air. Now then, let us see,” and putting back the too curious assistants, he proceeded to ascertain, as far as he could superficially, the extent of the injuries. “Some of you fellas might take down a shutter,” he said, as he looked up at length, “He’ll not need to try walking.”

Several men turned to obey.

“His wife ?” I said, looking at Grassick with a sudden recollection.

“Eh, ay ! She’ll not need to be startled. Some one

should run on and tell her. Mr. Wingate, would you, possibly ? ”

I agreed, and started on perhaps the most painful errand with which I had ever been charged. But there was no time to lose, and I could only pray that I might perform my mission discreetly; for I knew, besides that poor Tibbie was in no condition to bear a sudden shock.

Their lodging stood a little off the High Street—a fortunate circumstance, or Tibbie might have seen the whole affair. I knocked once and then looked in. “Is Mrs. Macaldowie here? I want to speak to her.” Either my voice must have been enough, or she had one of those presentiments which are, as it were, Heaven’s own warnings; for she came forward at once, saying—

“What’s wrong wi’ my Joseph ? ”

“He has been hurt by a horse. I trust, I pray it is not much; but they are carrying him home.”

She turned so pale I thought she would have dropped; but she recovered herself in a moment, almost refusing the assistance I would have proffered, saying: “Thanks, I’m all right. Where will I come ? ”

“They will be here directly. I think I hear them.”

As poor Tibbie went to the door to look out, my eye fell upon the piece of work which she had had in her hand when I went in, and which she had thrown down hastily. It was her husband’s surplice.

The men brought him in and laid him down in his

bed, their one little sleeping-room being on the ground floor. He had recovered consciousness, and I heard him tell Tibbie not to be frightened; he would be all right in a little.

Then Dr. Grassick came in, and a thorough examination followed. I offered to stay, if I could be of any use, and the doctor accepted my offer gratefully; so I remained till he had done his work, and then, following him outside, I asked him what he thought of the case.

"Well, he has had a pretty severe nip," he replied; "and my only wonder is that there are no more fractures; but ribs are very elastic things. He will do well enough, unless there is deeper-seated injury, and that we cannot tell at the first; time will show. How did the thing happen? Did you see it?"

I related briefly what I had seen.

"Plucky thing, wasn't it, to seize hold of a horse yon way?" he said. "If it hadn't been for these terrible slippery ro'ds, ten to one the beast wouldn't have lost his feet; but there might have been more mischief done if it hadn't been for poor Joseph."

I learnt afterwards that the horse and lorry had been left by the carter standing at a house door, and that the sudden fall of a lump of snow from the roof, as often occurs when the sun partially thaws it, had startled the horse and set him off. No doubt his nervous terror increased with his own unwonted velocity and noise; and it is indeed hard to say where the mishap might

have ended but for Joseph's plucky act, as he was a chance spectator of the runaway.

Charlotte was greatly concerned when she heard the story. We agreed that it was better not to go back to inquire for some time, as Tibbie had plenty of assistance from her landlady and neighbours. Somewhat late in the afternoon, when we did call, we found to our surprise Joseph sitting up and dressed, writing apparently business letters. On my remonstrating he declared there was no occasion for lying; he was well bandaged, and far more comfortable sitting up, and he had writing to do. I asked if he had sent word to his father, at which he seemed quite indignant.

"What for? about a bit of a tumble like this? No, no, sir; my father is not to be troubled with this. The horse is all right, and working, and I wouldn't raise a bother about it on any account. Likely my father would be angry and discharge the carter, and then we would lose the use of the horse, and he's as much value as two for the work he can do. If I can stop the idiots putting it in the paper that is to say! I'm going down the town ey now."

He got up as he spoke the last words; but there was a nervous restlessness, almost irritability, about him that I did not like, and I suspected he was not so well as he wished to appear. Tibbie was of the same opinion.

"Eh, Joseph, ye're nae going out at the door! and ye mind what the doctor said?" she cried; but added half aside to me, shaking her head, "He's so detairmined

if he says he'll do a thing. Do you stop him, Mr. Wingate; he is not well, really."

"Joseph, you must be reasonable, for your wife's sake if not for your own," I said. "You have no right to cause her needless anxiety, and you are much safer keeping quiet to-day."

"Well, well," he said, half laughing, but sat down again, "just to please her; but ye're just a stupid, Tibbie. I tell you I'm all right. Thank you, Mr. Wingate," as I was preparing to go; "I'm sure it's too mindful of you coming down to inquire, and Miss Wingate too, and I'm very much obliged. No; I'll stop in this evening, as I've said so. But there's really no occasion."

We took leave of them, trusting that it might be as he said. Next morning, however, our maid-servant when she brought in breakfast said,

"Have ye heard, sir, that Mr. Macaldowie's much worse the morn? The postrunner said that he heard them speaking about it at the station, and how that they'd telegraphed in for his father to come out."

It may be imagined that we lost no time over our breakfast, but as soon as it was over we started at once to inquire. Charlotte accompanied me in order to see if she could be of any use or comfort to poor Tibbie.

Dr. Grassick's little horse was at the door when we got there, and just then he himself came out. He is a cheery, sanguine little practitioner, and I liked the

omen the less as his face wore a grave, anxious expression as he met us.

"Ye'll be down to see him," he said. "Well, it's just what I feared might be : there are deeper injuries than showed at first, and they have set up inflammation. The foolish fellow got up yesterday evening, I understand—the very worst thing he could have done—and he has had a terrible night ; they sent for me about eleven, but the remedies have had no effect as yet. He'll scarcely speak to you, I'm afraid ; but they'll be better of a prayer, poor creatures. And, Miss Wingate, ye'll do a good deed if ye'll get that poor wife of his to lie down an hour or two ; she hasn't left him all night."

He passed on to his horse, and we went in, Charlotte remaining in the little parlour at first.

Yes ; poor Joseph appeared to be in a bad way. He was lying with his face turned from the light, his eyes half closed, moaning pitifully at times, and breathing as if every breath were a stab. Poor Tibbie, looking sadly worn and anxious, was sitting beside him, and rose as I went in. He did not look up or take any notice, though she said, "That's the minister come to ye ;" and I begged her not to disturb him.

"He's just near beside himself with the pain," she said, "and has been all night. It begoo'd" (began) "about seven o'clock yestreen, and just grew worse as the night wore on ; he never closed an eye, but just asked on steady for a drink of watter. The doctor said, to put on mustard, and we've done it, but it hasn't



eased him any yet. I've wired for his father this morning; he would not let me do it last night."

I stood and watched him for a few minutes, and Tibbie presently said—

"I'm afraid he'll hardly speak to ye, sir; but he spoke about you this morning, and I know he'll be so disappointed. Joseph, dear, it's Mr. Wingate, and ye was to ask him, ye know," she said, bending down to him.

He turned a little, and answered shortly,

"Ay. You know—when my father comes. Ask him yourself."

Tibbie looked at me.

"He's very anxious that ye would give him the Communion, sir. And he's ill about me stoppin'; ye winna refuse to let me take it with him, though I'm not a joined member yet?"

Anything more touching than the mingled humility and pathos of her appeal I never met with.

"God forbid that I should refuse you," I said. "You know what the rubric says?"

"Thank ye, sir." And bending down once more over her husband, she said lower—"Ye hear that, Josephie—he'll allow me stay."

"I will come any time you wish," I said.

"Thank you," said Tibbie again. "It was to be when his father comes. And I think we would need to wait and see gin he would grow a bittie easier. He canna give his mind right to anything just now, when he's so sore pained."

I agreed. And then I said a few prayers, which was all that seemed left for me to do. As we rose from our knees, 'Auntie' Skinner looked in, the work of the morning mail being over.

"Hoo's he keepin' now?" she whispered. "Eh, poor laddie, poor laddie! Isn't it right sair to see him? And ye look just done out yersel', Tibbie. Have ye nae been to your bed?"

"I couldn't go to my bed, and him like yon," said Tibbie simply.

"Ye'll kill yersel', Tibbie," said the compassionate old body. "But gin ye'll go and lie doon a whilie, I can nortice him the noo."

"And my sister is waiting in the next room," I said, "in hopes of persuading you to let her take your place for a time. She is a capital nurse, I assure you—quite an old hand."

"So kind," said Tibbie, with a wan smile. "I'll lie doun a bittie presently, if auntie can stop. Mistress Davidson's been real helpful too." Mistress Davidson was their landlady.

So I went home for the present, and Charlotte remained. She did not make her appearance till between two and three o'clock in the afternoon.

"Well, that poor thing has had four hours' rest, if not sleep, at any rate," she said. "It was rather difficult to manage. He takes no notice of her while she's there, but directly she is out of sight it is 'Where's Tibbie? Why is she not here?' And if she hears him ask for

her she will *not* be quiet. I shut her into the sitting-room, and told him she would come back after a bit, but he seemed as if he did not half believe me."

"How do you think him now?"

"Well, perhaps if anything, just a shade easier. And his father has come—just arrived."

"You saw him then?—what is he like?"

"Yes, I saw him—the redoubtable Mr. Macaldowie senior. Like? He is really a very fine-looking old gentleman. He has a white beard down to here" (indicating her waist), "and the keenest black eyes I ever saw. I should think he might be a curious character."

"How was he to his son?"

"I scarcely saw. I didn't wish to stop then. I didn't like his manner to Tibbie at all. He hardly took any notice of her when she went out and met him in her quiet, self-possessed way, but just walked in past her. I hope he will not worry her, for she has enough without that."

"Ay, indeed. What a sad business it is!"

Charlotte.

CHAPTER XX.

MY brother has had a great shock—all the greater because it has come so very unexpectedly. If we had been asked a week ago which member of his flock we should expect to be first taken away from us, I wonder whom we should have said? Old Barnard, perhaps. But old Barnard and his wife are still here, though she has been bedridden for months, and he is a martyr to chronic bronchitis.

My brother says he is sure he shall never have the heart to take up his notes again: that there are many things in them that he would never have put had he known how affairs would turn out; and so forth. When I said I thought it a pity that the record, which might be interesting to ourselves at any rate to read over when our Ruthieston life is a thing of the past, should break off so abruptly, he replied that if I wished it kept, I might carry it on myself. Moreover, that my experience, in later events, was fuller and more worth setting down than his. I do not know about this; but

I shall do as he suggests, for my own satisfaction. And latterly, perhaps, I have at any rate had closer association with the poor young woman, who has been and must continue an object of such melancholy interest to both of us.

To make the narrative connected, I must go back to the day after Joseph's accident, when his father had come out in answer to the telegram. Bertie went back later in the afternoon, and found things little better with the sufferer. He was very much put out at finding Mrs. Rennie there, fussing about and interfering in regard to the night-nursing. She spoke, he said, as if it were entirely her own and the old man's concern, and Tibbie were a mere cypher; behaving in a most disagreeable manner; and finally promised to send her Maggie to share the night-nursing, as she was invaluable, and had done wonders when 'dear Selina' was ill. Upon which Tibbie stepped forward in her quiet way, saying :

"Thank you; but there's no occasion for any but me and Mrs. Davidson. The doctor wishes as few strangers about him as possible, and says all may depend on keeping him quiet."

Mrs. Rennie was very angry, and said scornfully :

"I shall send her, though. *You* to sit up at night! We shall have you on our hands next."

Bertie says he was so disgusted at this that he could hardly speak civilly to the woman.

"Mrs. Macaldowie is the proper person to arrange

about it," he said, "and I shall endeavour to assist her in seeing that the doctor's orders are carried out."

Mrs. Rennie was furious, talked of young curates interfering where they knew nothing, I believe, and appealed to old Macaldowie, who, to do him justice, took rather the sensible view of the question. He was very civil to Mrs. Rennie, but finally stopped her by saying that perhaps there was no occasion for any more assistance to-night, as he intended to sit up *himself*: and so they got rid of Mrs. Rennie, for the time.

I feared the accounts of poor Joseph were very bad. There was no abatement of that terrible pain in the side; and all day long he had tasted nothing—"not an article," as poor Tibbie expressed it—except unlimited ice, which was a luxury to be had in Ruthieston for the picking up, at this time. My brother agreed in thinking him too ill and unquiet for administering the Holy Communion that evening; so it was arranged that he was to go over next morning to do so if possible, and at Tibbie's particular request I was to participate.

We went over immediately after morning service. Tibbie let us in, saying in answer to our look of inquiry:

"I could not say that he's any better, but he's ready, and expecting ye, sir, and Mr. Macaldowie's ready too; and I think," her voice trembled and sank, "we wouldn't need to put it off long. The doctor's away a little ago, and not to be back for an hour or so; so as

we will not be troubled," she added with that thoughtfulness which is one of her characteristics.

"What does the doctor think?" I asked.

"Well, he says the inflammation's not given way any as yet, and he's some feared what way it may go. It's worse to do with, ye see, him being so sore bruised, than if there was more bones broken even. But he says there's nothing more to be done, nor what we're doing, whatever."

So we went in. I have often been called to make one on occasions of the kind, with my father and brother; but I never remember to have felt so deeply touched as on this occasion. Tibbie and I had spoken so often together of her first Communion: with all her quiet reserve, I knew how deeply she looked forward to it, how earnestly she was striving to prepare for it: and now, was it to be also her husband's Viaticum?

Her demeanour throughout was most touching. That beautiful unaffected reverence and humility that seems part of her nature, mingled with intense watchfulness and devotion towards him who claimed her special care now, must have touched any one; would surely, I thought, disarm all prejudice in her father-in-law. But he knelt apart, stern and solemn, with eyes closed, and a sort of iron equanimity; as if determined to repress all feeling in outward appearance.

I was very much touched by poor Joseph's behaviour also; so quiet and patient and reverent; evidently trying his utmost to attend to and follow the service,

though one could see that he was suffering so sadly, that it must have been no small effort to him. When the service was over, I thought it best to come away. I could do no real good. My brother sat with them for a time, and then followed me home, as he had other work demanding his attention. Little Archie's lesson, I think, was quite a relief to him that day—distracting his thoughts for a time.

It was growing twilight again when he went down to poor Joseph's to see how things were, promising to let me know if I could be of any use. Not very long after, I received a pencilled slip from him, brought up by a little girl.

"Come at once," it said. "A great change. They want you."

I obeyed the summons at once. My brother met me at the door, looking very pale and sad.

"Come away in," he said. "He is quite calm and easy now; but Grassick says there's not the shadow of a chance for him. He wants to speak to you very particularly. I will stay in the sitting-room with the old man, and go you in to Tibbie."

I obeyed: chiding myself inwardly for feeling so nervous as I went into the little dim room, lighted chiefly by the fire-light till Tibbie turned the gas-jet on stronger, and it fell upon the still face on the pillow.

"Eh, he's fallen over asleep," she whispered. "Isn't it provokkin'," she went on, in the curiously uncere-  
monious way in which the humbler classes frequently



express themselves at most critical times ; "and he was so ill about seeing you, and you to come over so immediate ; but I believe it's just with the relief from yon severe pain, and he'll maybe look up in a while."

Yes, he was sleeping, like a child. There was no appearance of pain now ; he was lying easily on his back and breathing slowly and evenly ; but there was the indescribable shadow on the young face, which I had seen too often to be deceived.

"Pray do not mind," I said. "I can stay. It is a comfort to see him less suffering than when I was here last."

"Eh, yes ; he doesn't suffer now. Isn't it right strange," she still spoke in the lowest whisper, "to the pain to have gone away just all at once, like ? Dr. Grassick came in about three o'clock, and Joseph told him he had just grown as easy ; the only thing was, the bandages was too strett (tight), might he have them unloosed ? and when the doctor had examined him he gave him leave to have them any way he liked, and was comfortablest—it didn't matter ; an' syne he told me," added Tibbie, with a quiet twitch of pain about her mouth, "there wasn't any more he could do ; it was all wrong with him inside ; and he wouldn't likely suffer more pain—but he couldn't last long."

"Mr. Wingate's been so kind ; I couldn't tell ye so good's he's been," she went on presently, in the same tone. "*He* told him himself—for *I* couldn't—and spoke to him so beautiful, and so comforting, and gave him

absolution. And Joseph says he's quite happy, and quite ready to go—an' it werena for leavin' me, ye ken, and that."

How could she speak so calmly? I could not have answered her; I was struggling to keep from breaking down altogether, and upsetting her wonderful self-command and self-forgetfulness. I was not sorry that a little more time yet elapsed, during which I could collect myself as we sat silently watching the sleeper. At length he stirred, and spoke faintly. Tibbie was at his side in a moment, and they had a short whispered conversation; then she turned back to me: "Come, please."

I went up to the bedside. The poor young fellow looked wistfully up with those pathetic eyes of his, seeking for my face.

"Miss Wingate—you here? How very kind!" and then as I took his hand and would have said I know not what, of disclaiming any kindness, he went on: "I'm not well, ye know; I'm not able to thank you for all the kindness you've shown us. Will you always be a friend to my wife? It's a great thought to me to leave her, and what's before her—and that's not all. She has no friends of her own belonging to the Church—she's promised me she'll always keep true to it, and not go back—but I would like to think you and Mr. Wingate would always stand her friends."

"You may depend upon that, Joseph," I said. "It will always be a pleasure to aid her in any way, as long

as we are in this part. I hope she will always look on us as friends."

"Ye're not going away—not leaving Ruthieston?" he said, looking up anxiously.

"Nô, no; not that I know of at present. We cannot tell what *may* happen, you know."

"I *hope* Mr. Wingate will stay," he said earnestly; and after a short pause, during which he still held my hand, he said: "One thing more I was to ask, if you'll not think it a liberty: if her child live, will you be one sponsor—will you promise me now?"

I did hesitate then. I have always deeply felt the responsibility of sponsorship; and in this case the responsibility seemed unusually great, the opportunities of fulfilment unusually vague.

He saw that I hesitated, for he said: "Are ye not willing to promise? Mr. Wingate has done so—conditionally."

The look of entreaty in those dying eyes was not to be refused. "Well, Joseph, then, I will. If God gives me power, I will do my best to fulfil the promise."

"Thank you very much; you have eased my mind a great deal. I have no one I would like so well to ask, and her friends are all Presbyterian, and I believe she'd have been diffculted to know what to do. And ye'll notice her whenever her trouble comes? Sometimes I think it's little beside trouble I've brought her all through; but *she* wouldn't have had it any other way.

I never thought to have to leave her, to stand her lone so soon."

"She will not be alone," I said. "HE is especially the GOD of the widow and fatherless."

He did not speak for some minutes; when he did it was to say: "If my father would make a home for her, it would be the best thing; but I know that cannot be, He has never taken to her. But he says he has no ill-will now. Mr. Wingate 'll may be tell ye—I'm not able to go over it again." He stopped, as if tired or drowsy, then looked up with a little start. "Are ye there, Tib? Ye're not away from me?"

Poor Tibbie flew up to his side like a faithful dog that hears itself called by name, almost pushing me aside. "I don't see ye very well," he said; "it's all so dim and misty-like—except just there—see, look. who is it, just out over yonder? Why, it's Mr. Hill!"

A sort of awe-struck feeling came over me as I turned and looked round. My brother had entered softly, followed by the old white-bearded man, who probably was growing impatient at the length of my visit; but there was no one else. And Joseph was looking fixedly before him—not at Tibbie or at them.

"Eh, fy no; it's Mr. Wingate," Tibbie said; "he'll give ye a prayer, may be, just now, and ye'll rest yersel' a wee while," she added in a low, soothing voice.

"Mr. Hill," he repeated slowly and distinctly, without heeding her. "And he's all white—such a bright light

—and he's holding the chalice in his hand. What beautiful !”

“Eh ! look, see, see, he's going !” cried Tibbie, in a voice of anguish, dropping on her knees and flinging her arms over him. “Joseph, my own own man, speak to me, look to me just once !” but he still looked beyond her, at something which *we* could not see.

But at Tibbie's cry, the stern silent old father strode past us to the head of the bed, and raised the dying man in his arms.

The change of posture seemed to give some relief ; he did not speak, but lay quietly with his head resting upon the old man's breast, while my brother began to say the prayer for the departing. But it was not the end, only the beginning of it—the first entering of the dark valley. We knelt on for a few minutes silently ; then my brother rose and came up to me.

“You had better come with me,” he whispered ; “it is time for evensong. This may go on for some hours, and there is nothing further we can do at present.”

So I rose, and we went out together. I shall never forget that night. The clear, frosty starlight ; the soft, muffling snow in the streets ; and the dim little church, with the few gas-jets we lighted ourselves burning here and there ; the literal ‘two or three’ that dropped in to join ; and my brother's voice, so sad and solemn when he said, “The prayers of the Church are asked for Joseph Macaldowie, at the point of death.” He read the Commendatory Prayer through again, the first time

I had ever heard it said in church ; but it is usual here when special mention is made of any one, to read a collect from the Visitation Office. How like a dream it all seemed ! Joseph Macaldowie—one of the youngest, strongest, healthiest, cheeriest people we knew, at the point of death ! If only it were a dream, and one could wake and forget that dim, solemn room, and that sad, wistful, changed face, which seemed as if it must be some one else's, and our staunch young Churchman would walk into his seat in front of me and kneel down and join our service, as he had done so very few days ago !

The service was a comforting one, though I felt how it tried my brother to go through it ; and when we came out we went round again to the scene of our anxiety to inquire ; I feeling almost afraid of the tidings that would meet us, as if I could hardly face them. But Mrs. Davidson, who came to the door, said it was just the same, even as when we left, so Bertie went in, and I came on home.

Hour after hour passed and he did not appear. I could not go to bed ; so I kept the fire and the gas burning in his room, and sat there, and watched, and waited.

At last I heard him open the door with his latch-key and come up-stairs. It was about half-past two. I went to the door of the room to meet him.

"Sitting up for me, dear ?" were his first words. " Yes, it is all over. Poor Joseph !"

He came in, and sat down beside the table ; and I don't believe any one will think the worse of him for quite breaking down then. I sat down beside him, and we had our cry together, like a couple of children. I think we both felt that we had lost his first, and our best, Ruthieston friend. And there were circumstances connected with this death which made it peculiarly sad.

"Tibbie ?" I said, when he looked up at last.

"Quiet ; quite quiet and calm. Grassick thinks she's all right."

"He was there, then ?"

"Yes. He's a good kind fellow. He called about ten, just to inquire ; and, though he could do nothing, he stayed all these hours as he said he was not wanted elsewhere, especially, I believe, on her account."

"Do you think I could be any comfort to her ?"

"Not now. She has 'auntie,' and Mrs. Davidson and her daughter. I think she wants quiet and rest chiefly."

"How was it ?"

"Very peaceful and easy. He lay for hours just as you saw him last. I don't think he was ever conscious, or looked up, or spoke connectedly, again—though poor Tibbie tried hard, many times, for a word or a sign. About half-past one there was a change, and a short struggle—mercifully short. He died in his father's arms."

"I am sorry for the father—poor old man !"

"Ay, poor old man, now! I fear he will have not a few 'reflections,' as they say. I asked if he would like to come here, but he says he shall stay at the hotel till the funeral is over. He is a strange man—very strange! One cannot feel much liking for him, though he is certainly to be pitied."

"But they were reconciled, were they not?"

"Reconciled—yes; it was time. It weighed on poor Joseph's mind, when he knew he was not to recover, that he had behaved undutifully; but really, the fault was rather on the other side."

"I think the worst about the old man is his hardness and prejudice against poor Tibbie. One cannot understand its continuing still; or indeed from the beginning."

"Cannot you? I am afraid there were 'wheels within wheels.' It has been gradually opening upon me. Willie Fyffe let in a good deal of light by some things he said about the time of the marriage. That horrid woman, Mrs. Rennie—for she is a horrid woman—had a good deal to do with it."

"I never quite understood how Mrs. Rennie should have been mixed up in it."

"I think it arose from this. Mrs. Rennie had saddled herself with that unhappy Selina, and then wanted to shake her off, and at the same time to make a good match for her; and as the poor foolish girl chose to go and lose her heart to this young fellow, there it was ready to hand."



"But I thought the old man wished it too."

"Of course; for his own ends. *His* object was to please Mrs. Rennie; at least, so it appears. If his son had taken to Selina, it would have been very plain sailing for him; whereas if he married this homely country girl (though she is well enough born, for that matter), Mrs. Rennie might turn up her nose at the connection. They all despised Tibbie for her homeliness, as well as her Presbyterian upbringing; and when they found Joseph determined, they tried to get up imputations on her character, and to make out that it was all her doing. The old man spoke some words to his son, just before the marriage, that poor Joseph found it hard to forgive; and, ever since, they have been living in a kind of estrangement, only meeting when business obliged them, and so forth, till now. *That* much, Joseph told me in our last conversation; though I partially guessed it before. You know all the trouble that was made last winter, and how the old man tried to separate them. Poor Tibbie has never known the extent of their malice; I trust she never may, for a more pure-minded, simple nature than hers I have never met with. I think you have found the same."

"Indeed I have. How beautifully she behaved this morning!"

"Yes; I was very much struck with her; that extreme reverence and attention to the service, and yet you could see she was wrapt up in him, and watching every

movement to try and help him. I never had a more touching service."

"Yes; and fancy, Bertie, she said to me just before, while you were preparing, 'It's so good of him to allow me! I'm afraid I'm not so well prepared as I would have liked—I haven't got time to read my bookie; but I think,' looking at her poor husband, '*yon's* preparation.' Oh, how wretchedly unworthy it made one feel *one's self*!"



## CHAPTER XXI.

WE felt very anxious for the report when we called to inquire after poor Tibbie next morning.

Mrs. Davidson, however, who came to the door, said that she was "fine, and had kept up real well; but she was sleepin' eynow."

"Will ye come ben and see *him*?—he's terrible bonnie now that he's streekit" (laid out).

Used as I am to the ways of her class, the matter-of-fact tone in which she spoke shocked me. I said no, I would come again when Tibbie was able to see me.

About midday Bertie met Dr. Grassick, who had just come from the Barnards, and told him the old man was very failing and ill; so my brother thought it his duty to go and see him at once, and set off accordingly for a long tramp through the deep snowy lanes. I therefore went down in the afternoon to Tibbie's alone.

I found her up and dressed, quite calm, and even like her usual self, but for the pale sad set face that looked as if it would never smile again. Not a tear did she shed, even when she took me into the inner room and

turned back the covering that I might look once more upon our friend's face.

"Terrible bonnie!" the words came back to me involuntarily. Yes; what a serene young face it was, now that the sorrow and the pain were all out of it, and there only remained that wondrous expression of hidden content which one sees on faces of the dead. As Tibbie whispered:

"Disna he look just like as though he'd been seeing or hearing something so beautiful, only he wasna able to tell us?"

Then she took up some long folds of fine linen which I recognized at once.

"That's his surpleece I was makin' to him against Christmas. I was to ask Mr. Wingate's permission to put it on to him when he's laid into his coffin. I would like him to wear it—forbye that I wouldn't like to see it upon another. Eh, Miss Wingate, ye're greetin'—what kind ye've been! Me, I just *canna* greet, ye see—isn't it right strange?"

It seemed so; but I had seen cases not dissimilar, where the reaction, when it came, was all the more severe; and I could not help dreading what the effect might be in her delicate state.

We went back to the front room. Just then a voice sounded at the door behind us, a voice strangely plaintive and solemn, yet not altogether unknown to me:

"Will you let me come in?"

We turned round. In the doorway stood the figure of a tall girl, draped to the foot in a dark close ulster; a broad-brimmed black beaver hat on her head, and a small black travelling-bag in her hand. Under the hat was such a pale, sad, wan face, with great spectral-looking eyes, set in a frame of loosely-arranged flaxen hair. I could not mistake it, or did Tibbie, as she uttered a surprised whisper :

“Eh, Miss Hall !”

“Yes,” replied the apparition ; “I have been to Mrs. Rennie, and she has told me all. She wrote to me. I have travelled day and night to look upon him once more. You will not refuse me this, Mrs. Joseph Macaldowie ?”

“Eh no, than,” said Tibbie in her quiet matter-of-fact tone, so much sadder to *my* ears than even demonstrative grief. “Come in, if you please.” And as Miss Hall stepped forward, Tibbie grasped my arm, whispering in a nervous ‘aside,’ “Stay you, Miss Wingate, I’m feared at her.” I was glad, for indeed I would not willingly have left Tibbie alone with this strange guest.

I saw Miss Hall follow her into the chamber of death. She first knelt down silently by the bed, and remained in that position motionless for a few moments. Then she rose, and drew out of the little bag which she carried a long narrow pasteboard box, out of which she took carefully a single bloom of the glorious white eucharis (which at that season must have been difficult

and expensive to procure), and laid it tenderly and reverently on the dead man's breast.

"Good-bye, Joseph," she said in a strange clear voice that chilled me to listen to. "No one in this world knows how I loved you. Perhaps you know it now, and how I was wronged and misled, though not by you. Yes; I think 'you will wake, and remember, and understand.'"

"Eh, see till her!" said the poor widow in an awe-struck whisper, as Selina finally, after a long farewell look, stooped down and kissed him on brow and lips, and then passed silently out, without a word to either of us. "Would ye not rest yerself?" Tibbie said; but she paid no heed, and walked out like one in a trance. From the window we saw her take the turning to the railway station. "She winna do herself any ill, do ye think?" said Tibbie, doubtfully. "Wouldn't somebody need to nootice her?"

"I *hope* she is all safe," I said; "but if she is going back by the train she will have a long time to wait, and she looks so tired and cold that I think I will follow her and see if she would come home with me."

"I think it would be real kind o' ye," said Tibbie, as if relieved. "She's awful strange-like. And she be to have loved my Joseph, or she would not have taken so much trouble, poor creature. Yon's a right bonnie flower she's put there. I was just wishing I had something, but there's not a blade to be seen the noo. He shall keep that, whatever!"

I could not help admiring Tibbie's large-hearted compassion and the absence of jealousy towards the poor girl who had 'loved her Joseph' not wisely but too well, as I plodded my way through the snowy streets in pursuit of her. At the railway station I found her, sitting quite alone in the dreary little waiting-room, warming herself at its fire. She started a little when I went in.

"Excuse my following you, Miss Hall," I said, "but I knew there was not a train for some time, and I wanted to ask if you would not come home with me and have a cup of tea first. How cold you are! and this is wretched weather for travelling."

"It is rather cold," she answered dreamily. "It was cold in the train last night. I came away so hurriedly, I never thought about wraps; but I shall get a rug this time."

"Did you really come from London last night, and go back without a night's rest? I should have thought Mrs. Rennie would not allow that."

"Mrs. Rennie! Mrs. Rennie has had enough of me already," she answered. "She did not expect her letter would bring me, when she wrote and told me what was happening. Besides, I have brought no luggage—only this," showing her bag. "And I have a drawing-class to-morrow at two; it would be as much as my employment is worth to miss it. No, thank you, Miss Wingate; I cannot afford to stay. My journey has cost too much for that. I paid for it with the price of one of my pictures, do you know, that I sold."

Poor girl! I could not help compassionating her. She looked so ill and sad; so aged, too, with such worn lines in her face.

"And are you really well and strong now?" I asked.

"Oh, yes. Well enough to work, and strong enough to suffer."

"And to *conquer* suffering," I said.

"What do you know about it?" she asked abruptly, looking in my face. "Have you ever loved and lost?"

"I have lost many who were very dear to me," I answered.

"Ah, yes; but not in the way I mean. You could not look so calm and sunny if you had. You have not seen one whom you loved with your whole soul—worshipped utterly, intensely—taken away, led away, turned away from and against you? No. You are very kind and feeling for me, I see; but you cannot understand fully. Your life has not been like mine." She paused, then went on speaking in the same rather rambling way, as if it were a relief to her. "Mine has been a very shady, lonely life, with little sympathy and little brightness. I think the sun just began to shine on me a little when I first knew—*him*. If things had gone—as they *ought*, life might have been very different for both of us. But there were adverse influences at work; and then my sun went out—went down—and left it all dark—dark and cold," she ended, with a little shudder. I hardly knew how to answer her, but I pressed her hand silently, and she said: "You do feel



for me, Miss Wingate?—and perhaps if you had been here *from the first*, things might have been different for me.”

“I do feel for you,” I said, “but I do not think it is as you say, with regard, I mean, to—to *him*. I could have had no influence one way or another, as his affections were pledged before even my brother came.”

“Always the same story! Well, let it be, now. She has not had him long. I hated her once, I know; but I don’t hate her now, Miss Wingate—I wish her no ill.”

“Who *could* wish her ill?” I said. “Surely she has every claim on our compassion and tender regard!”

“Oh, yes, of course, I know; and I hope she will be all right and recover. But of course she will; peasant women like her don’t die. By and by I dare say she will be quite consoled and marry again; marry some common, rough, broad-speaking man, like herself, and be quite happy; all the happier when she has given up his very name, the name which only *I* shall cherish in my heart of hearts! These sort of people have *no* hearts; one would think sometimes, positively, they have no souls!”

“How very little you must know them!” I could not help saying. “But now, will you not come back to the parsonage with me for half-an-hour even? This room is so cheerless.”

“No, thank you—no; I may as well be here. Thank you for your sympathy. It has done me good speaking to you; I have none to sympathize with me. But I

prefer to be alone just now. Don't mind me, pray, Miss Wingate; don't stay now, it is cold and cheerless for *you*."

"Not at all; only I will not force myself upon you if you wish me to go. I will wish you good-bye, if there is really no way in which I may help you! Do try and be comforted," I could not help adding; "remember, no sorrow can crush those who trust in our FATHER'S Love. And all our troubles are fully known to Him."

"I'm not quite crushed yet; do I look it?" she answered, with such a weird smile. "I think I shall be better after this. And coming has helped me to *realize* fully, what otherwise would have been like a horrible nightmare. How splendid he looked!" she went on in a changed tone, her eyes suddenly lighting up. "Like a watching Angel, with sealed eyes and lips, at the gates of Paradise, knowing all the glories within, but forbidden to reveal them to mortals without!"

It was Tibbie's very idea, in other language hardly so pathetic as her own. I think Selina would have been surprised to find the 'peasant woman's' imagination so completely on a level with hers.

"I wonder if I shall be able to work the idea into my next picture," she said musingly. "Well, good-bye, Miss Wingate, good-bye; thank you for your kindness to a waif like me."

So I parted from this extraordinary young woman,

sincerely pitying her state of mind, but with a sort of inner conviction that after all the fittest place for her was a private asylum.

My brother was late in returning from his long tramp through the snow, and very much done up when he got home. Old Barnard, he says, is very ill, and the old woman sadly complaining and helpless ; but they have a good strong willing girl as nurse, who is paid by the parish, and Mrs. Reid Douglas sends comforts and necessaries of all kinds.

We had a long talk over many things : perhaps especially poor Selina. He was a good deal surprised at my story. He went out again after taking some dinner : first to call on old Mr. Macaldowie at the hotel, then to visit and read with Tibbie. The latter visit was the most satisfactory to him. The old man was stern and unapproachable, except on business matters relating to the funeral. But Bertie was full of admiration and praise of Tibbie, whom he reported as still well and calm, and, to use his words, " in a saintly frame of mind."

" One really cannot fear for her," he said. " Trials are specially tempered in a case like hers, and there is no undue exaltation or excitement. I really think she may pass through this time without the reaction one feared at first."

Then he took up our evening daily local paper, saying with a sigh as his eye caught an announcement :

" Ah ! how soon these things get into the papers !"

and then, "Goodness me, how very remarkable!" and put the sheet into my hand.

Of course my eye first caught the familiar name.

"At Ruthieston, on the 28th inst., from the effects of an accident, Joseph Macaldowie, junior (of J. Macaldowie and Son, coal merchants), aged 26, deeply regretted."

But two lines below followed :—

"At Torquay, on the 24th November, after two years' patient suffering, the Rev. Horace Hill, formerly priest in charge of St. Peter's, Ruthieston, Scotland, aged 29. R. I. P."

## CHAPTER XXII.

I HAVE seen many stormy days since I came to live in Scotland, but I never recollect a day when it snowed so miserably as on that of poor Joseph Macaldowie's funeral.

I was sorry for all who had to attend it, but especially for my brother, to whom both in mind and body it would be a great strain. I had visited Tibbie each day before it : she always liked to see me, and could talk to me unreservedly. I offered to go and stay with her on this day, during the time of the service ; but she said she would as soon I came after—she would be best just her lone at *the* time, and her father and various friends were coming in, and might be about the house beforehand : so I said I would not go till later.

The arrangements were all made by old Mr. Macaldowie. St. Peter's has no burial-ground of its own : consequently after the service in church, the procession had to go on to the large kirkyard of the Established Church—presumably consecrated ground, as that building is of the pre-Reformation period.

From the upper windows of the parsonage I could see the mournful *cortège*, creeping on through the fitful melancholy snow. First, the great frightful hearse from the 'Glenforth Arms,' its high black plumes becoming every moment more heavily loaded with white, drawn by two thin bay post-horses draped with black cloth, sliding wofully every now and then for all their 'frosting'; then, on foot, the followers—the white-bearded chief-mourner, and several other friends, among whom I suppose was Tibbie's father; the provost, the doctor, and chief tradesmen of Ruthieston, Willie Fyffe, besides a good many from the town, for the Macaldowies had a large connection and were much respected. It all looked so sad, so dreary; especially to me, being used to our bright comforting village funerals where my father and brother always discouraged the use of black trappings, and which were always headed by the surpliced choristers.

Only the pure white snow, as it fell silently, made me think of our friend as I had last seen him, robed according to Tibbie's special desire in the surplice he never wore in our earthly service—the first of our choir to put it on! How little we had thought of this when we gave Tibbie the work to do!

When I thought all would be over, and had managed to calm myself—for reading the service alone to myself had cost me many tears—I wrapped myself up and went down to Tibbie. I hoped the guests would have dispersed, but one or two solemn-looking Scotchmen in

black broadcloth were about Mrs. Davidson's parlour. She bid me, however, "Come in, please," and pointed to Tibbie's inner room, so I went to the door. Within I saw Tibbie sitting, in the widow's weeds put on for the first time, and which gave her a kind of pathetic matronly dignity; beside her a dark, middle-aged man, whom, from his position and demeanour altogether, I at once guessed to be her father. He was speaking to her in a low voice, and I caught the end of a sentence "and so ye'll just think it over. Mrs. Sellar 'll nottice ye fine—and ye know pairfitly well yersel' she couldna nottice ye here"—and then they both looked up and saw me, and Tibbie said: "It's my father, Miss Wingate."

Mr. Sellar rose and offered me his hand courteously. "I was just sayin' to my dochter, miss, that she be to come out and stop at her own home wi' us—she'd be a heap better. It's no for the like o' her to be stoppin' here her lane, and she has a good home to ging till. So ye'll lat's hear fro' ye, Tibbie."

Tibbie sat with her hands meekly folded in her lap but said nothing.

"Well, well, I'm awa'. I doot the train 'll be some hinnert wi' this \* byous storm—gin she's nae stickit a' thegither."

"Wouldn't ye stop the night, father?—ye ken the room's empty."

"Na, na: cudna. I mun be hame the nicht, gin I've to traivel upo' my fit. Well, gweed nicht to ye, lassie;

\* 'byous,' extraordinary, excessive.

ye'll mind as soon 's ye get time to think—ye winna get yer mind richt given to onything the day, I doot—peer thing, peer thing! Dinna lat doon yer hairtie too sair; ye'll get comfort mebbe gin a whilie."

And patting her tenderly on the shoulder, he went out. And poor Tibbie looked round her desolate room, saying half to herself: "Eh! what way would I get comfort?"

I sat down by her and kissed her—I could not help it, but I do not think she disliked my doing so; and said, for something to say, that I was glad to have seen her father, and that he was so loving and tender to her.

"Eh, he's good, my father," she said; "eh! he's right kind to me—they're a' kind—and I'm feared I affront them, and I *canna* do as they wish."

"About staying with them?" I asked.

"Just that. He's for me to go out there to live, and my stepmother to nottice me when I grow ill, and that—so much trouble to be willin' to take! but it's impossible I can do it, and I've told him so, but he'll take no denial; and I'm feared he grow angry."

"Are you not too scrupulous, dear Tibbie? What you call trouble would probably be a pleasure and gratification to them."

"It nae just that, Miss Wingate; they stop nine miles from the nearest Episcopal church; and what way ever would I win to it, supposin' even they were willin' to yok' a horse and gig ilka Sabbath? And what way would I take *his* child to be bapteezed, if we live?



More than that, who would see it was done, if I die ?—for they dinna care for the Church, and they've no dealin's wi' the clairgyman, and I doubt they wouldna be very willin' to call him even if I were dyin' ! I did just say to my father that I wouldn't like to be where I couldn't win ; and he said I should just never mind now ; my a'ld kirk was as good's ony other, and so on. I couldn't argy : but it was my promise to my husband or he died that I would aye keep firm, though he told me himself I'd maybe be diffculted. He thought of that, Miss Wingate, the dear creature ! and that was just one thing he said made it so sair till him to leave me my lane."

And poor Tibbie took a stiff clean white handkerchief out of her pocket and rubbed her eyes, which were red and hot and dry.

I could hardly conceal my admiration for the firmness and conscientiousness displayed by this humble but sincere convert, in giving up the offer of comforts and loving care amongst her nearest relations, rather than put herself out of reach of Church ordinances. I told her I knew she was quite right, and that if she followed her duty conscientiously, things would be sure to come right in the end. I knew, too, that my brother would be pleased. And then I told her of the announcement we had seen in the paper some days ago, thinking it might interest her to know. She was much struck.

"Eh, is Mr. Hill deid ? Eh, to think of that, now ! Do ye mind, Miss Wingate, what *he* said yon night—just his last words, near ?" she added in a lower tone.

"Yes, indeed I do. May we not think they are together now—the faithful priest and his loyal friend?"

"Eh, yes. He was terrible fond of Mr. Hill, my man was—just awfully disapp'inted at his leaving."

"And I suppose you remember him too?"

"Eh, aye; fine that. Only, ye know, I wasna in the way of going to chapel, unless just at a time, might be. I wish now I'd commenced sooner," and a deep sigh ended the sentence.

It was growing dark; and my brother coming in to read some prayers as usual, I preceded him home.

I found we were to have a guest at the parsonage that night. My brother had asked Mr. Fyffe—'Willie Fyffe' I always hear him called—to sleep, after the funeral, as the weather was so stormy; and being a Saturday, he could be spared. So he came in about the same time as my brother.

He was looking wretched, and hardly able to speak a word. When tea was over he and Bertie disappeared into the study, and I saw no more of either till bed-time.

They had had a long talk together, of which Bertie told me the substance in few words. Poor Willie had met his old flame, Miss Selina Hall, at the terminus on her return journey. It was quite an unpremeditated, unexpected meeting; but they had time for some conversation, and at the end of it Willie came away with the firm conviction that Miss Selina Hall was not for him.

They had walked up and down a remote part of the

platform for nearly an hour; and he had tried every persuasion, every inducement, everything that he could think of, to bring her to look favourably on his suit. Selina might indeed have been tempted by such constancy, and the chance of such a home as he could give her, in her homeless poverty, obliged as she was to work hard for her daily bread; but she cast it all beneath her feet, as it were—a kind of ‘faith unfaithful’ keeping her ‘falsely true’ to the lost and broken idol, that was never really hers at all. She seems to have said most extraordinary things to him in that conversation—some which he would not repeat, and some which, having repeated, my brother would not repeat further; and at any rate that interview was too much for his common sense and right feeling, as well as his Scottish prudence; and he certainly would not have been justified in binding himself to a person who, as he delicately put it, was, he sadly feared, ‘a little touched.’

So they had parted finally when the London train was starting; he having had the melancholy satisfaction of securing her a comfortable seat in a compartment shared by two sufficiently strong-minded-looking ladies and a gentleman, who were also going all the way.

Of course my brother could not but entirely approve of the wisdom of the resolution which young Fyffe had taken. But the poor fellow was sadly miserable; what with the loss of his old friend, and the utter surrender of the hope to which, especially since that friend’s marriage, he had fondly clung.

We felt for him very much ; but both Bertie and I thought it much better for him that the breaking off should be at once and final ; and that there was the more chance of his mind regaining its even balance, and of his one day perhaps being able to find consolation in a more suitable and promising attachment.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

I CANNOT say how sad we felt in taking up or continuing our various works again after our sudden loss.

It was a loss which made itself felt in little matters, to my brother especially, ten times in the day. I used once to joke him for the way in which he leant upon Joseph; and tell him, just to tease him, that it was going to be Tobias and the Angel over again with him. But we were feeling constantly now, by force of sad contrast, what an infinite help one staunch strong fearless young layman in a parish or congregation can be to his priest.

The secretary and treasurership was one way in which we felt his loss most keenly. My brother has such an intense dislike to dunning; and though I preach and uphold to him that it is part of a clergyman's natural duty to beg, I am not fond of begging if I have it to do myself. Writing, for instance, periodically to such people as Major Glen or Mrs. Rennie to remind them that their next quarter's subscription is due by such a

day, is most irksome. Mrs. Rennie, by the by, has cut us both dead ever since the day when Bertie offended her so at poor Joseph's lodging.

I think my brother's chief interest and solace now is in preparing for the confirmation, which is drawing near. Frank Reid Douglas has come home; but the weather does not allow of much intercourse now between us and Piterichie. But Frank and his sister were well prepared in the autumn. Bertie wished to have one final instruction with them, and to give the certificate cards; and as the roads are so bad and the days so short, Mrs. Douglas asked him to remain a night, and (very kindly) to bring me also. It was a very grateful change; and I felt that we both needed it after the trying scenes through which we had passed. It was a pleasant variety too after our new and rather bare-looking parsonage—though we have made it, for less than a year's habitation, fairly homelike—to live in that large old-fashioned castle, with its cosy nooks and winding passages and quaint turrets. It possesses also a good though small library, which was a real treat to Bertie.

Mrs. Reid Douglas is a person with whom it is impossible not to get on: she is so simple and so true. So perfectly acquiescing too, without a shade of jealousy, in her son's and daughter's change of religion: perhaps, as he will so soon be master here, it is almost more generous of her to acquiesce in his case than in that of Ina.

Dear little Ina—not that she is little, for I look up to her ; but she is one of those people whom one calls ‘little’ for want of a better adjective of endearment—came to my room in the evening at bed-time to show me her confirmation card, and to indulge in one of those nocturnal chats dear to the girlish mind. Reserved as she is by nature, she opens out wonderfully when alone with me ; but loving and honouring her mother as she does, I think it *must* be painful sometimes not to be able to argue on all points, or to open her heart to her on the most sacred topics. I suppose not being able to do so to her natural home guide makes her turn more to me ; for with my brother she is shy, and hardly does herself justice.

I do not find on looking over his notes that he has ever really described Ina. I should like to do so ; but it is difficult, for people say, oh, she is not the least pretty, except in figure and manner. I think she more than anything else reminds me of a white dove : her sweet gentle expression, and even more, the tones of her voice. She is fair, has gray eyes and small delicate features, set in I suppose rather a flat face ; but her complexion is very delicate and clear, and she is so graceful and so perfectly unthinking of herself, that this alone would go far to make her admirable.

I shall often look back to this winter night that we spent over the fire in my large cosy bed-room full of dark corners and old-fashioned heavy furniture. I don’t know that there was anything worth setting down

in our conversation; it was chiefly on the one then engrossing topic and on serious matters. I finally told her that she and our talk had reminded me of my youngest sister who had been confirmed—though really much younger than Ina—not a year before I came north; and we parted most affectionately, when she at length carried away herself and her card. “Williamina Penelope Reid Douglas, examined for confirmation and approved.” What funny names run in these old Scotch families!

I felt quite sorry to bid all good-bye next morning. Ina's young sister Fanny is a nice little creature, though not so interesting in any way as Ina; and her governess, an English clergyman's daughter, we found very approachable on Church matters. Frank was to drive us home in his sleigh, in which we went merrily down the hill; but at its foot Bertie and I wished to be dropped, to call on the old Barnards: so he had arranged to leave our traps in the village, as he had an errand there.

The next candidate in whom we were most especially interested was of course poor Tibbie. And Tibbie had had rather a trying time of late. Her father had been back again to see her, trying with all his might to persuade her to come home with him at once. He, poor man, could not comprehend that she should give up such substantial advantages and comforts “for the sake of a bit chaipel,” when there were her own kirk and her own minister ready, no doubt, to welcome her



back with open arms. And so when he found she had but one answer to all his pleadings, he at last seems to have lost patience, and told her she was "just a wilful wife, and she must gang her ain gate, and he was done with her. Maybe she was lookin' out to keep house to old Macaldowie; but he doubted she'd ha'e long to wait for *that* app'intment." For he was besides greatly nettled at old Macaldowie's neglectful and contemptuous treatment of his daughter; and therefore it seemed to him doubly displeasing that she should choose to hold, as it were, by the religion of her husband's family, where she met with so little regard, rather than return, now that she was so mournfully free, to the bosom of her parents and the kirk of her youth.

The substance of this I learned from Tibbie herself. I believe the last interview with her father cost her, not a few tears, for these she never shed now, but a considerable heartache. But she did not complain: she kept her troubles to herself. In a few weeks after her husband's death she gave up their two rooms, which were more than she required, and went back to her old quarters at Auntie Skinner's.

I fancied that this arrangement was quite as favourable to auntie as to her niece: for though Tibbie could not undertake her old telegraph and postal duties, she was very useful in the way of supervision, and was a pacific element in the house. Poor auntie had been in continual hot water, I knew, with a succession of telegraph lads and lassies since Tibbie left her to be married.

But it was so melancholy to see her in the old place, the same yet so different : sitting with her little bits of sewing or knitting beside auntie's cosy fireside, which had witnessed the happy courting days. Old auntie was excessively kind and tender over her ; yet I knew that the old woman with the best intentions could not but at times have fretted the young widow and expectant mother.

Taking everything together, however, perhaps it was the best arrangement that could have been made. At any rate she was within easy reach of the church ; and whenever she was able, through these Advent days of preparation, Tibbie would creep along the snowy street to her corner in St. Peter's, where she always seemed happiest.

The confirmation was to be on the day before Christmas Eve. We watched the weather anxiously. There was a sort of lull in the storm about this time—a partial thaw ; and the weather was milder, which was a relief.

We had a fairly good number of candidates, I was told, for the place ; though to me it seemed very small. Only three men—George Arthur, Rae's youngest son, and Frank Reid Douglas. But of women there were, besides Ina, two Miss Raes, the Lindsays' under-nurse, an English maid at the Fergusons', our own cook (who was an Episcopalian when she came to us), a farmer's daughter, and Tibbie Macaldowie. We seated them—the male and female candidates—on opposite sides on the front benches : the young women filled their whole

bench, which was close to my harmonium-seat. We were to have one hymn; but there were not many singers, two of our principal choristers in training, the two candidates, being the only ones present.

I could see them all very well; and I watched poor Tibbie with special anxiety. It was sad and touching to see her, in her sombre black dress and crape-covered mantle and heavy widow's cap, contrasting with the light dresses, caps, or veils of the other young women. Dear Ina looked very pure and innocent in a soft white cashmere, made close to the neck, and a tulle veil; but she was evidently thinking not at all of her own appearance, but intent on the service. Tibbie was most devout and attentive, but I could see that she was very nervous, and that her hands trembled very much. I was thankful for her sake especially when it was well over. The Bishop's charge was most impressive; and as he addressed himself especially to those who must live surrounded by friends and neighbours who differed from them, telling them that they must hold fast, though in all charity, to their profession, and be ready to give a reason to any who asked them for the choice of their life, I could not help thinking of the different ways in which these young people now gathered together might be called on to uphold their profession.

Our kind good Bishop was much struck by the young widow, having heard her sad story from Bertie, and besides knowing her husband's family; he had prepared

and confirmed Joseph. He spoke a few words of kind counsel and sympathy afterwards to her especially, and then I took her home myself. The other young people, with the exception of Frank and Ina who returned at once with their mother, were to have a quiet tea at the parsonage. The Bishop left immediately by the train.

I could not stay with Tibbie, as I had to return to attend to our guests. I left her safely in auntie's charge, begging that she would go and lie down at once. She said little, but I thought there were something like tears on her eyelashes when she bid me good evening, and whispered :

"Thanks so much, Miss Wingate. And I do feel so thankful I have been able to win. I seem sort of *ready* now for whatever may happen."

## CHAPTER XXIV.

THE confirmation day's engagement had put me somewhat in arrears with my Christmas decorations; though the Miss Glens and Elsie Harding, the Pitcrichie governess, were helping me at home and in church. Accordingly, on Christmas Eve, after matins and a hasty breakfast, I had retired to a spare uncarpeted room to work, and was sitting on the floor with an old apron and garden gloves, in the midst of a sea of icy, prickly evergreens, when the sober and staid Bella, our house and tablemaid, looked in with,

"Please, Miss, that's Miss Skinner from the Post Office wants to see ye very particular. I've just put her into the dining-room."

I jumped up and ran down-stairs with a beating heart, for I felt there was only one subject on which Miss Skinner would want to see me 'very particularly.'

The old lady was evidently in a great state of excitement, but the expression of her face was reassuring.

"I beg your pardon, miss, for interrupting ye so airly, but Mrs. Macaldowie's gotten a son the morn,

and doin' fine, and she was ill about me lettin' ye know mysel'-or any word got about, and so I just ran up so soon's I saw her any settled like, thinkin' ye'd maybe be glad to know."

"Oh, I am thankful!" I exclaimed, with a gasp of relief, "but I am surprised. She is really doing well, you say? and the baby?"

"Eh, yes. It's a wee, wee thingie, but not that ill, considerin' that he's come home ower soon," Miss Skinner dropped her voice confidentially. "And, 'deed, what other could be expeckit, wi' all the trouble and annoy that poor thing's come through this whilie? it's maist a wonder the twa o' them's livin'; and she to be out at the chaipel yestreen. 'Deed, Miss Wingate, ye'll excuse me, but I do think she was over fatiguet; but when a's well so far we must just be thankful."

"Yes, indeed we must. Well, Miss Skinner, I am much obliged to you for coming. Will you give her my love and say I wish her joy and comfort in her Christmas gift; and I will come and see her as soon as I may—perhaps to-morrow. You must keep her *very* quiet."

"Eh, are ye no comin' the day, missie? Then I'll not say I'll get her keepit that quiet; it's aye 'Miss Wingate' and 'Miss Wingate,' and 'divna I think Miss Wingate 'll be down to see the baby?' Poor thing, she's just terrible fond of it a'ready," said the funny little old spinster, with a condescending chuckle over maternal weakness, "for as wee as it is."

"Well then, Miss Skinner, I will call in the afternoon in case."

And when Miss Skinner had departed I ran to Bertie to impart my news, and we knelt and said a prayer and thanksgiving together.

I was glad when my church work was finished, ready to put up, and I could go down to the Post Office. Miss Skinner met me, saying,

"I'm real relieved ye're come, miss, for she's doin' well enough, but she's aye lyin' greetin'; and ye'll maybe tell her it's her duty to hold hersel' frae greetin' the noo. We've put her up the stair, if ye'll hae the goodness to step up."

It was the room which my brother had occupied, and before him, her poor husband. I fancied it must have some sad associations for her; but it was a comfortable room, more quiet than the ground-floor.

Her plain, patient face—which I had come quite to admire for its pathetic wistfulness—was hardly more pale and wan than I had seen it for weeks past; it wore, indeed, a more restful expression, and her lips parted in a real smile as I entered. She did not speak at first, when I bent down to her and whispered my thankful congratulations; then she turned back with one hand the coverings to show me the little chrysalis bundle sound asleep, nestling on her arm, with the question—usually the mother's first expression of exultant joy, so deeply pathetic in her case,—"*Isna he right like him?*"

Yes, I could truly say so. For besides the wonderful

impress of paternity which is often more strongly marked in the new-born infant than later on, this wee fellow had already the finely-pencilled eyebrows and long curved lashes which were poor Joseph's speciality. He was a very pretty little baby; which even I, baby-lover as I am, must confess that some infants are *not*.

Poor Tibbie! her tears came readily enough now as she looked at her little fatherless boy; but I thought they must be a relief to her after the long unnatural impassibility, besides being a part of her present weak condition: so I did not chide her, as Miss Skinner no doubt wished me.

As I stood looking down upon mother and babe, she said presently in a half-whisper,

"I'm frightened for old Mr. Macaldowie. I'm frightened he seek to take my child from me."

"Oh, Tibbie, that would be impossible!"

"I'm not so sure. Ye see, it's a boy, and he'll maybe wish to bring him up his own way—and he has no opeenion of me."

"Still, no one can take a child from its mother while she is able to keep it. He is not likely to wish that at present. By and by, if he desires to be responsible for his education, it might be natural and right that he should; and I suppose you would not object to that? Does he know of his grandson's arrival?"

"Yes; auntie wired—at least she made Dr. Grassick put it in his own words—the message. We thought it best, as it was some unexpected. And the answer



came back to him—of course it came through auntie's hands, ye know—'Mr. Macaldowie to Dr. Grassick. Your telegram received.' Just that; not one word more."

"He does not show much interest," I said. I was afraid to show how angry I felt.

And after a few minutes more I considered it best to come away, for I thought the poor mother seemed very weak and low. I begged again that Miss Skinner would guard her from all excitement or annoyance.

"And that I'll do, to the best o' my poo'er," auntie said. "But I believe she'll have less command o' hersel' the noo. Ye see, she hasna shed a tear, 's far's I know, sin' ever poor Josephie was taken—an' that's nae nait'ral. And syne it all seems to come upon her now. But she's pleased too—and the craterie is just his picter—I sanna say. I hope to good it'll be spared to pleasure her some."

I went back to my Christmas Eve preparations. I was to have the pleasure of Elsie Harding's society for a few days. She was given a short holiday; and not wishing to go south to her home at this season, she was glad to accept my invitation to spend a little time with us.

Christmas Day was fine and milder, the snow thawing somewhat. We had a good congregation; and the choir, who had been formally admitted on Christmas Eve, put on their surplices for the first time at the midday service. But the whole thing—thankful as we felt in

some ways—was very much mixed with sadness. Poor Joseph had been so associated with the choir from the first and so interested in it. And there was no one who supplied his place in steadiness and precision as a singer; no one who took a keener delight in the work, or helped me personally, as player, so much. It was difficult to realize that he was lying—all that could die of him—in that snow-covered grave in the dreary old kirkyard, and that the frail little life which had just begun was all that remained to keep up his name and remembrance here.

Our newly-confirmed mustered in full force, and all remained to Holy Communion. My brother was much pleased with the demeanour of all the young people. Their reverent attention showed that they realized the greatness of the privilege to which they were now admitted.

In the afternoon, between services, of course I went to see Tibbie. We had inquired in the morning, and heard that she was going on pretty well; consequently we thought it advisable that she should wait a little for the full keeping of her Christmas feast.

I found her quiet and comfortable, a good deal taken up with the care of her baby, who seemed rather a restless and exacting little individual; but her first words after I had given her my Christmas greeting showed the bent of her thoughts.

“Well, and did ye have the kyre? I doubt ye felt the miss o’ *him*.” And when I said: “Yes, indeed we

did, dear ; but we tried to think of him as really joining with us in spirit," she went on : " Do you know what's been in my head steady all morning, Miss Wingate ? Just a line of a bit song I tried to learn once, about a kyre-boy ; ye'll know it yourself :

" ' He sings among the angels now  
Beside the crystal river :  
The light of God is on his brow  
For ever and ever ! ' "

" Yes, I know it," I said. " Sullivan's ' Chorister.' "

" The very same. *He* was terrible ill about me learning it once, a good while ago, before we were married, to sing at some of our glee party's soir'ees ; but it was no use, for just as soon as I got to yon vairse, my voice shook and shook, and I lost all command of it, and was like to greet ; wasn't it real curious ? But it's pretty, isn't it, Miss Wingate ? "

" Yes, it is. And though I think like many of these popular poems it mixes up ideas, and the words refer really more to the *future* state of the redeemed, still we may believe that the saints in Paradise do have their part in the endless anthem, beyond what we can conceive."

" Yes. And after a while, do ye know, I had fallen over asleep, and I had such a strange-like dream ; may I tell ye ? I thought he came in and sat down aside me and said : ' You and me'll try over the Christmas hymns a bit, Tibbie,' and I said : ' I've never sung a line, Joseph, sin' ever you went away.' ' Never mind,'

he says, 'ye'll sing now ;' and syne he took the concertina that we used to sing to, and commenced playing with such a loud dirlin' sound, close to my heid, that I woke with the great start—and there was the baby skirlin' all that it was able ! and that had been the sound I heard," and poor Tibbie ended with a sort of hysterical laugh and sob.

"It was curious, dear," I said ; "but, do you know, I think it is a sort of little parable—that this is his messenger to tell you you are to cheer up and sing your thanksgiving hymns again by and by."

"I don't know," she said, rather wearily. "Sometimes I think he'll not thrive at all. He's awful waefu' like, now that I can see him better. Any of my little brothers—my stepmother's babies—would have made two of him. I've had a lot of them through my hands, and I know. Just you lift him, Miss Wingate—he's no weight at all."

I did as she asked, and took the little bundle in my arm. He was a poor little morsel, certainly ; but I had seen far worse specimens live and thrive, and I told her so, as I rocked him gently and pacified the wail which was beginning.

"Ye're a fine nurse, Miss Wingate," said Tibbie, admiringly. "I wish I saw him bapteezed, poor lammie ! He's your godson, you know."

My godson !—the thought came upon me all at once, for in the surprise of his unexpected arrival I had forgotten it for the time.

"Ah, yes, Tibbie; I suppose he is."

"Ye'll keep your promise?" she said, wistfully. "Mr. Wingate too. Do you think, Miss Wingate, the minister would accept of his name? Of course, after his father's; but I would like he should have that too."

I believed I understood her meaning. "I am sure he would be much flattered," I said; "and for my part, dear, I shall do my best to fulfil my promise to his father." And then I thought Tibbie had had talk enough; so I offered to read her some of the day's Psalms and Lessons, which she gratefully accepted. I read until the poor baby's crying put a stop to it, and I was obliged to leave Tibbie and him to the care of the woman who nursed her.

After this all went on fairly well for a day or two. On the fifth day after the baby's birth, I, being used to the ways of country folk, was not surprised to find Tibbie up and dressed, sitting by the fire in her room. She seemed however a little flushed and nervous, and immediately I went in she began:

"Mr. Macaldowie's been out here, inspecting us."

"At last," I said. "And how did he—*behave*?"

"Oh, well, he just touched my hand, and said, was I well enough? and he looked at baby, and said he was a poor thing, and asked to see the woman that nursed me, and when I said she was away he called auntie, and asked at *her* if the doctor considered the child was being rightly done by—as if I wasn't fit to nurse my own child!" Tibbie ended indignantly.

"I'm glad, at any rate, he shows some interest."

"Well," Tibbie continued, "then he went and he stood up in the middle of the fire" (indicating the centre of the mat), "and looks round just as if all the place belonged to him, and he says, 'I'm out here, ye're aware, to arrange about the baptism, and to find sponsors, which devolves upon me, of course; and I shall act myself in the first place.' I said, of course he would please himself as to that, but that my husband, or he died, had asked Mr. Wingate condeectionally if it was a boy, and Miss Wingate in *any* case, and they'd promised; and he asked—just think of the *impidence*!—if there was any one to prove it, and I said, the minister and Miss Wingate both could answer for it, and *I* had heard them myself. So he draws himself up just as stiff, and he says, 'If that's the case there may be some ackwardness, as I've spoken to a lady who I know is most willing to stand—I ought to have been informed before. But I'll away and see Mr. Wingate.' And so when he had me just shakin'—that I was fit to ha' let the baby fall, he went away without another word. And it's a wonder you hadn't met him, for he's not long away to see the minister."

"I am sorry he has vexed you," I said.

"Vexed is no the word," said Tibbie, who was evidently greatly upset. "He puts me just mad. Of course I know whatten a lady he's meanin'. But the child's *your* godson, Miss Wingate, let who say what

they like. You'll hold your promise to my man—you won't let him put you off?"

"Certainly not, if I can help it. I consider that promise sacred. But try and not let this disquiet you, dear; it will make you ill."

"I'm not fit to help it," said Tibbie, with quivering lips. "I say to myself often too how bad it is to me to feel like I do towards him—I know—he's my Joseph's father"—she was sobbing now. "But the Lord knows I'd do anything in my power for him—I'd work for him like a *sairvant* if he'd allow me; but he's never given me one kind word or look, and he seems just to try what way he can insult and annoy me! Don't mind me, Miss Wingate; I'm easy upset the now. I'll come right gin a whilie. Maybe ye'd best go home and see if *that man's* annoying your brother—he's every chance to; and he'll maybe no be satisfied unless he hears this frae your own lips."

I was of the same opinion; and I thought besides that Tibbie was doing herself no good by talking on the subject. So I left her, begging her to keep quiet, and to trust that all would be smoothly settled; and hastened home.

I saw Bella in the act of carrying a tray with wine and cake into the study; and she stopped to tell me, sure enough, that Mr. Macaldowie was with the minister, and Mr. Wingate had desired her to let me know as soon as I returned, so I went in at once.

There I found the visitor, sitting up, erect and

dignified and grave, on one side of the fire—my brother opposite; and I was conscious of an extreme aversion to his stern, handsome old face—the more so as I perceived at once that Bertie was on thorns. My entrance seemed a relief. After I had greeted the old gentleman, my brother said :

“I am glad you have come in just now, as Mr. Macaldowie was anxious to see you; and *you* may perhaps be able to convince him of the truth of Mrs. Macaldowie’s statement regarding her husband’s dying request to you. There is no doubt, I believe, that you promised to stand sponsor to his child, in compliance with his urgent entreaty?”

“No doubt at all,” I said quickly. “Does any one doubt it?”

Mr. Macaldowie turned towards me with a sort of bow.

“I am pairfitly satisfied as to the correctness of Miss Wingate’s statement; but unfortunately the circumstance is an exceedingly ackward one, there being no necessity for two godmothers—which of course could not be foreseen when my son spoke to her; but under existing circumstances Miss Wingate will no doubt feel that she is quite freed from the engagement she so kindly and generously undertook, of which I am deeply sensible.”

“Not at all,” I broke in. “Your son asked *me* unconditionally, and I consider my promise to the dead as sacred; besides the express desire of the mother, to whom I have renewed my promise.”



Mr. Macaldowie cleared his throat slowly.

"As to that, perhaps Miss Wingate is aware that my son married against my express desire and in opposition to my intentions for him, and I do not consider the wishes of this person as in any way entitled to regard. The entire choice rests with myself; and perhaps Miss Wingate may prefer to withdraw her promise, considering that the lady whom I have asked is likely to have a closer and more permanent interest in the youngster than herself," the old man [ended, with a kind of complaisant smile, and affectation of great courtesy.

For a moment I felt a little hesitation. If I feared, as I had once done, the responsibility, here was an easy way out of it. But I could not help seeing before me, as it were, those sad, pleading, dying eyes of poor Joseph's; to hear Tibbie's entreaty to keep my promise to him; and I felt miserable. I looked at Bertie for advice. Brothers and sisters can generally telegraph by the eyes; and I read his answering look as encouragement to persevere.

"Mr. Macaldowie must be aware," I said, looking rather at my brother than at him, "that he is placing me in a very painful position. Of course, if he insists that I am not to act, I cannot help myself; but I could not reconcile it to my conscience voluntarily to give up the right to fulfil my promise, given to both the father and mother of the child, and before any other party could have been asked."

"Very good," said the old man. "It only remains for

me to express my gratitude to Miss Wingate for her detairmined interest in my grandson; I hope he may live to desairve it." I thought this was horrible irony; and felt even more aversion to our guest as he poured out for himself a glass of the sherry my brother had placed before him, and then, with a most formal bow, said, "Your good health, Miss Wingate."

After sipping his wine and nibbling at some cake for a few minutes in silence, he went on, addressing Bertie:

"With regard to the day for the baptism, it remains for the Sunday I have fixed—first after Epiphany; if Doctor Grassick is satisfied that the child can with safety be taken out."

"And the mother," I put in, but bit my lip the next moment for my impatience.

"That is quite beside the point. Her attendance is a mere matter of pleasure to herself; which of course is no to interfeere with the baptism of the child as soon as it can take place with safety. Of course, Mr. Wingate, if there is the slightest danger you will baptize him privately, on the doctor's authority. But as I shall be out here probably most part of the intervening time, I shall of course expect intimation, that I may be present. Being sponsor-in-chief, ye will understand that the naming rests with myself; unless" (with a sarcastic twinkle) "any private instructions have been left on that subject."

"Mrs. Macaldowie has expressed a wish—" I began,

but Bertie made a sign to me to stop. And our unwelcome guest rose at the same time to depart, with a conclusive sort of air, as though no more need be said on the subject. We both felt relieved when he was gone. I was especially thankful to have carried my point; for Tibbie had seemed so excited about the matter, that I should have been quite afraid of making her ill, had I failed at last of fulfilling her request.

The few days that followed, in the Christmas and New Year's Day octaves, would otherwise have been pleasant ones to me, in the society of Elsie Harding, who entered very pleasantly into my different Church works and interests, and made herself generally an agreeable companion.

We had another visitor this Christmas, namely, Willie Fyffe. He came out partly on a business visit to Ruthieston. The bank to which he belonged was to open a branch there early in the year, of which he was to be the local manager. Of course we asked him to spend a few days with us.

I felt glad that his visit should have taken place during the time Elsie Harding was with us. She is such a thorough, nice girl, full of useful occupations and accomplishments, yet without a jot of affectation, that I could not but think it would be a happy thing if both could become better acquainted. I said so to Bertie one day in private; and he laughed, and asked if there were any other matches I wished to make.

## CHAPTER XXV.

I WAS so far pleased with the result of my match-making that our two guests got on very well together, and parted on very friendly terms when the visit came to an end.

I am afraid there is another matchmaking which bodes ill for poor Tibbie. Old Mr. Macaldowie is very often at the Lilacs: he occupies Mrs. Rennie's seat when he comes to St. Peter's; and we have seen him walking with her in the street. However, nothing is as yet announced.

My brother and I looked forward with anxiety to the christening Sunday. Tibbie was getting on so well that we quite hoped she might safely be churched and attend the service by the appointed day; though it was an early one. She had been much relieved at hearing that my brother and I were resolved on keeping our promise. Her only anxiety now was about her baby's name. The grandfather sponsor obstinately refused to divulge his intention, and had told her bluntly that she would hear it when it was given. Her wish respecting

my brother's name he simply pooh-poohed, saying there was no such name in his family; and though she had a brother Robert, he would not have it under any pretext. She consulted us on the subject, being now only anxious that her child should bear his father's name; and we came to the conclusion that, should Mr. Macaldowie bestow any other and leave it out, my brother should, by her authority and as second sponsor, add on Joseph at the time on his own responsibility.

I was rather dismayed when I rose on that first Epiphany Sunday and saw it the most disagreeable kind of day that we have in winter—a raw frosty fog and drizzle. But, as the saying is, I don't think ropes would have held Tibbie from going to church, and I found her quite determined; so it was to be at the half-past three winter evensong. Mr. Macaldowie had ordered a close fly from the hotel to convey the baby safely; and Tibbie carried him herself, "auntie" coming with her, chiefly in the capacity of nurse. I met them at the door, and put auntie and baby into the vestry, where we had a good fire, while I remained with Tibbie. I had asked Elsie Harding to play for me that afternoon, so I was quite free to attend to my duties.

I went up to the altar-rail with Tibbie, who seemed hardly fit or able to walk alone. She was very nervous, almost more so than I had ever seen her. But we got safely through that part; though when I brought her back to her seat, her poor face, under her heavy crape

bonnet, was quite streaming with perspiration ; bitter as the day was, and cold as I felt the church, spite of all our endeavours. She sat quietly through the service up to the time of the baptism ; though I knew it must try her very much, as well as the first sight of the surpliced choir.

At length the time came. I had summoned auntie from the vestry with her charge, and we of the christening party gathered round the font. Mrs. Rennie, in very unwidowlike costume, had taken up her position in a seat close by, and appeared to watch the ceremony with great interest. I held the baby, not without some heart-beating on my own part ; till at length I surrendered him to my brother, hoping that he was fully equal to all emergencies.

When the name was demanded, Mr. Macaldowie stepped forward and said solemnly and distinctly, "Joseph Ainsworth." At the same moment I heard a sound of gasping sobs, and turning, I saw poor Tibbie leaning, almost in a dead faint, on little auntie, who supported her with difficulty. Some people in an adjacent seat came to her assistance, and between them they got Tibbie away to the vestry ; while I remained the sole female custodian of poor little Joseph Ainsworth, from whom the changing of hands (though Bertie really holds babies very nicely) and the touch of the water elicited a most dolorous wailing, which I could by no means pacify. As soon as the charge to the sponsors was over I hastened with him to the vestry. Poor

Tibbie was recovering; but her friends in need had, with more goodwill than prudence, loosened her bonnet and dress, and opened the door; and the place was full of the cold raw outer air. I hurried her to the fly which was in waiting, and went home with her, auntie, and my godson.

His demands on his mother's attention were peremptory; rather fortunately, as helping to distract her thoughts. I sat by her a little in Miss Skinner's room while she nursed her baby; and at length she turned and said to me, "*Whatten* a name have they given him, Miss Wingate? Joseph *what*?" and when I told her, "Ainsworth—Ainsworth—that's no a family name, whatever."

"Perhaps in his family?"

"Not that *I* ever heard. Joseph's mother was Lumsden. *Ainsworth*—sic a curious—well, it's not Rennie, any way."

And then, as a sudden thought struck her, "I say, it'll be Mrs. Rennie's *maiden* name."

"Possibly," I said. "I never heard what that was. But he has his father's name all right."

"Eh ay. The rest disna matter. He's just Josephie to me—my ain poor wee fatherless loonie. Well, I should be thankful it's all done as *he* said; though I'm real sorry to ha' been so stupidlike, and given you so much trouble, Miss Wingate; but 'deed I did feel so very nervish. I was frightened Mr. Macaldowie would make some disagreeable, and annoy

the minister; and just when I saw Mr. Wingate take the baby, I seemed to grow blin', and such a buzzin' like in my ears, and then I knew nothin' more till I was into the vestry—and 'deed I was real ashamed. I do hope yon auld man winna be in here the night now, for he does put me a' of a tremble when he comes."

I hoped so too. And as I left the Post Office I felt the more dismayed on encountering Mr. Macaldowie and Mrs. Rennie together at the door, having just come from church. Mrs. Rennie gave me only the most frigid look—hardly bow—of recognition; her companion however was very civil.

"Ah, Miss Wingate! So ye've been as kind as come home with the poor weak-minded creature."

"I am glad to say she is better," I answered; "but I hope she will be very quiet for the rest of the day."

"'Deed, I think you make too much of her," he replied coolly. "It was a pity she hadna kept yon display till she got home—makin' such an ado in the church."

"Only, unfortunately, people cannot always choose their time for fainting," I said; for I felt so angry I was 'shaking' just like Tibbie.

"She was quite hysterical too," put in Mrs. Rennie, "before she fainted."

"Ay. What had she got to do fainting? She should have stopped at home, and not come out if she was to



faint. I was pairfitly ashamed;—no command of herself at all.”

“I think you forget, Mr. Macaldowie,” I said, “that she has barely recovered from a premature confinement, under most trying circumstances; and, considering all things, she has displayed great fortitude.”

And then I went out, feeling very uncomfortable at the thought of poor Tibbie and her most unwelcome visitors.

So ended, for Bertie and me, the events of this uncomfortable and melancholy christening Sunday. Next day, about noon, I set off to inquire after Tibbie and the baby; and, on reaching the Post Office, was aware of visitors in Miss Skinner’s parlour. A well-dressed middle-aged woman and a little girl were sitting by the fire; but auntie met me as I stopped in the front shop, with rather a troubled face.

“’Deed, I’m glad ye’re come, Miss, for I was o’ the pint of sendin’ up to ye. Tibbie’s very unweel the day—taken a weed, I doubt, wi’ the ca’ld—and she’s awful fivvered like, and nervish, and talks so strange-like, whiles; and for the baby, he’s skirled on steady a’ night; I was just medd with the twa o’ them. Step ben, please—it’s just Mrs. Sellar; she’s been up wi’ Tibbie, and takin’ a wairm at the fire or she go to the train.”

“Don’t move, please,” I said, as Mrs. Sellar rose and turned round with a smile. I thought her a pleasant-looking person, though rather brusque in her move-

ments and manner. "I will go up if I may; but oh, I am sorry to hear so bad an account," and I mounted the steep stair, and went quietly, without knocking, into Tibbie's room.

My poor Tibbie! she was lying in her bed with such a flushed face, such a feverish glitter in her eyes; and almost before I could speak she began, in a nervously complaining tone, very unlike her usual patience:

"Oh, Miss Wingate, is it you? Eh, I am so ill, and the baby's so ill, and just a' thing going against us, and I hope we'll both be taken soon! Is it any wrong, do ye think, now that he's baptized, to pray we might both be taken? for 'deed I do not feel as if I could live, and a' body against me now," she ended, in a burst of tears.

"My poor dear, you must not say such things," I said. "You have taken cold yesterday, and you are ill and weak and feverish, or you would not think so. You have had a bad night."

"Awat have I," she answered. "I doubt I have taken the cold—I couldn't have rested anyway; one while I was shakin' and my teeth chatterin', the next just like a fire. And the baby was never quiet one half-hour; he's just skirled himsel' done the noo, poor wee thing, and fallen over, but I know he couldna be well; and syne everybody's been just annoyin' me all day, I couldn't tell ye." She put her hand to her head.

"But who has been troubling you?" I asked.

"First one, then another." She spoke so excitedly, I

was afraid her senses were going. "The auld man came first; and when he found things not all as they might be, he goes and must bring Mrs. Rennie to fuss and pry about, and syne he says to auntie, 'I'm going into the town to fetch out a right nurse to that child,' he says, 'for it's no to be destroyed through foolishness if I can hinder it.' So I believe he's gone, and Mrs. Rennie with him, and they'll take my baby from me, just's I told ye. Then my stepmother has been here. 'Tis all for good *she* does it, I know; but she's been quarrellin' me about the chapel, and takin' out the baby, and goin' out mysel' in this weather, and if I had minded my ain friends and been out wi' them, all this wouldna have been; and she wants me to let *her* take the baby and bring him up; and 'deed, Miss Wingate, I canna do wi' them all. If they'd only leave me to auntie, and let me have peace, maybe we'd win through; but if we do, I don't see what's before us but troubles and difficulties; and 'deed I wish I might die and go to my husband," and she left off at length in a flood of hysterical tears.

She was almost past reasoning with. I could only beg auntie to send at once for the doctor, and advise her to call in the nurse who had been with Tibbie at first; and I waited a little to hear his opinion. Dr. Grassick was soon on the spot. He said Tibbie had taken a weed, as a feverish cold caught under her circumstances is called here; that she was very nervous and excitable, and that the utmost care must be taken

to keep her from outward excitement. By evening, however, she had grown much worse, and became almost delirious, and quite unable to take any charge of her child.

Mr. Macaldowie and Mrs. Rennie came back in the evening, having been unsuccessful in their quest, which might after all have been a useful one. However, Mrs. Duguid, Tibbie's nurse, seemed to be succeeding well in her management of the poor baby now that his mother had failed him; but he engrossed so much of her attention, and poor Tibbie, moreover, clung so in her half consciousness to me, that I obtained permission to instal myself as her own nurse and guardian, feeling at least that I might be instrumental in keeping disturbing elements away.

I was hardly aware, however, what an arduous task it would prove. I undertook to stay with Tibbie at night, as it was an object to keep the baby's crying out of her hearing. Weak as she was, her large-boned wiry frame had a terrible strength when the fever fits were on her, and more than once I had some difficulty in keeping her in bed. And her talk! I have watched people in delirium before; but never in my life have I heard anything so heart-rending as poor Tibbie's rambling words. It was as if all the shock and strain and harass of the last month, so patiently and quietly borne at the time, came back on her now with a terrible reaction. Sometimes it was her husband, sometimes her child, that was ill and dying, and Mr. Macaldowie

was keeping her away; and Miss Hall, and Mrs. Rennie, and the cruel old man, seemed all mixed up with her delusions. I tried saying prayers and hymns, and my brother came and prayed beside her; but we could not tell if she was sensible. Mr. Macaldowie came every day; but was satisfied with merely inspecting the child, and did not intrude himself into Tibbie's room. Dr. Grassick said hers was a very peculiar case: there was so much nervous disturbance, superadded to the incidental symptoms and the fever, which alone would be sufficiently trying to combat. He said she would have a hard fight for life, if she recovered. He was most unremitting, kind, and considerate in his attention to her; not the highest lady in the land, I think, could have had more thought bestowed upon her. It must have been, humanly speaking, in great measure his skill and watching that brought her through; for by degrees the fever abated, and there were intervals of consciousness; and after many days of fluctuation between hope and fear, he pronounced her really on the mend.

And the baby? I had trembled for him at first, but after that terrible night and day he began to thrive better, and to accommodate himself to his change of circumstances. Dr. Grassick said he was doing so well under Mrs. Duguid's care that it was better to make no further alteration in the management; so the kind offices of Mrs. Rennie and his grandfather were not further called into requisition. And by the time poor

Tibbie was able to ask faintly, and as if she feared the answer, "if her baby was away?" I was able to bring him in—holding on for dear life to his feeding-bottle—and show her how much he had improved.

He was her best doctor after that. She liked to have him laid in the bed beside her, and, when she could sit up at last; to attend to him in any way that she could. And sometimes, when he was well warmed, and fed, and contented (which last by no means always followed), he would lie on her knee and look up at her under those nice little curling eyelashes with a smile that had something of his father's lurking fun in it, and won a genuine smile from her.

Not till we were well into February did I relinquish my charge, and come back to poor Bertie, who had been very good in sparing me so much; and I received some very formal courteous thanks from old Mr. Macaldowie for my care of the 'poor creature,' which he declared was far more than could have been looked for from a lady who had no connection with his family. "But she's just a poor, *selly*, nervish, weak-minded sort of a body, and likely to continue," he concluded, "and it was an ill day for our house when she got hold of my son, ye see."

I thought, though I did not say so, that that might remain to be proved.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

AFTER my return to the parsonage, things seemed to go on very quietly in the Ruthieston world for a time.

My brother said that I was looking thin and fagged after my nursing duties, and proposed, as there was a week yet to Lent, that we should fulfil a long-deferred intention of running up to Inverness, to see the cathedral principally, for it was not the season for touring. The weather being open, we enjoyed it much; the entire change and absence of care for the time being as beneficial to Bertie as to myself, after a somewhat trying winter. We were both feeling brighter and stronger when we returned.

Willie Fyffe has come to settle regularly in Ruthieston, a pleasant circumstance for us. He has joined our choir, and Bertie hopes he will take poor Joseph's former office of secretary. I am glad to see that he and Elsie Harding almost always manage to have a few words after church on Sundays. Mrs. Reid Douglas and her elder children are away in the south.

Tibbie Macaldowie and her boy have been getting on very fairly. After her recovery she did yield to the entreaties of her friends so far as to go out to her father's for a little change, which the doctor urged upon her; but nothing would induce her to stay more than a fortnight, when she came back, and was soon a diligent attendant of our Lenten services.

Bertie and I had a very busy Lent of it, in our different ways. I think he began to show the effect of hard work and little change, by the end of it, more than I did. Our friends at home had for some time been pressing on him the expediency of a real holiday, which he has not had now for over two years; and we were both, though sincerely attached to our northern home and work, 'thinking long,' as they say here, for real home faces and scenes again.

So it came about that, through the exertions of my father chiefly, a friend was found, to whom a run down to Scotland, and a few Sundays' duty at Ruthieston, would be as great a relaxation as a run home would be to Bertie. And between Easter and Ascension he and I set off on our southward journey; and had a *thorough* holiday, partly at our own home, partly in London, partly with other friends.

I need not set down here the details of our trip. Suffice it to say that we found most complete rest and refreshment in it; and great solace and interest in talking over our Ruthieston life with dear ones whose interests were bound up in ours, and to whom



our little histories had all the charm besides of novelty.

Four Sundays were all that Bertie could allow himself : and during our return journey we found much amusement in speculation as to how Mr. Nugent, his *locum tenens*, had been getting on with our Ruthieston friends.

The little town looked very homely and natural when we stopped at the well-known station once more.

"Let us look in at the Post Office," I said, as we walked up to our own house through the High Street, and my brother readily agreed. Auntie seemed full of life, and received us with a most demonstrative welcome. Tibbie was in the living-room, looking quite blooming, with her five-months'-old baby sitting up bravely on her arm. He had certainly got on wonderfully lately, and was the picture of health, though small ; what he lacked in size he made up in keenness and vivacity.

"He's terrible engagin', growin'," Tibbie said with a just pride, as she gave him into my arms.

"And how have you been getting on, Tibbie ? Has Mr. Macaldowie been giving you any of his company lately ?"

Tibbie looked down and smiled.

"I think he's been better-natur'd lately. He's awfully taken up, ye see, about the marriage."

"What marriage ?" I said, forgetting for the moment.

"Eh, his own. He has it all made up with Mrs.

Rennie, ye know ; they're contrackit. I suppose he'll be to let ye and the minister know himself soon."

Bertie's next visit was to old Rae, the church officer, from whom he had a satisfactory report of parochial matters during his absence. Mr. Nugent was a "terrible nice gentleman, and had been terrible weel likit, and the choir had been attendin' real steady, and Mr. Fyffe and Miss Harding" (my deputy player) "had been takin' a deal of interest in the practease."

I doubted within myself whether it would not be for the mutual advantage of Mr. Fyffe and Miss Harding if I relinquished my post of organist to her altogether. But then she can only come from Pitcrichie once a day. If she likes to go on with it, I shall offer her the morning work, which will be rather a relief to myself.

Not many days after our return Mr. Macaldowie was announced as a visitor.

He was always very well-dressed and sleek ; but on this occasion his broad-cloth was finer, his tall hat shinier, and his silver beard more beautifully venerable-looking than ever. He appeared to be in extremely good humour ; and it struck me particularly how very little he had, all through, seemed to feel the death of his only son.

After a few insignificant remarks he came to the purpose of his visit, which was to announce to us that he had entered into a contract of marriage with a lady who was very well known to us, "namely, Mrs. Caroline Ainsworth or Rennie." He pronounced the names with

great solemnity, so that I really hardly recognized Mrs. Rennie under such a string of titles.

Bertie had his wits about him sufficiently to congratulate. I asked when it was to take place.

"Oh, not or autumn, I think. Mrs. Rennie will have all the arrangement her own way. Besides, I have a new country house building, and I would like it some ready to take a lady to. She does not like living in the town altogether; and I must be in town every day—business is business, Miss Wingate—so I have taken a feu about three miles out, on the—— railway line, and am building there. Which, after all, Mr. Wingate, is the best thing, when one has the means. A pairson can consult his own tastes."

My brother quite agreed.

"Another little matter I should mention, though of course you will have the printed intimation; but I am going to take Mr. Lumsden, who has been representing us here since my son's death, into partnership. Mr. Lumsden is a connection of my first wife's family. The firm will henceforth be known as Macaldowie and Lumsden."

"Oh, indeed," Bertie said. I think we failed to find the announcement quite as interesting as Mr. Macaldowie expected.

"Joseph's child seems doing pretty well," he remarked presently. "Likely to live, I should say."

"Yes, decidedly; he does his mother credit."

"Ahem! Mrs. Rennie hopes to have him a good deal

with her by and by. She is most kindly interested in his welfare.

"Don't you think, Miss Wingate," he continued, "it would be an excellent plan for the young woman to go out and live with her friends in the country? I understand they are very desirous that she should."

"She has told me one strong reason against it. She is a most earnest Churchwoman."

"I dare say she would soon accommodate herself though," he replied, with a sort of chuckle. "I'll wager they'd get her married again in no time; which would be by *far* the best thing for her, and for us, eh?"

I did not think it necessary to make a reply to this.

"Yon Post Office is a nasty place—just a low gossiping place, whatever. All the low scandal of the town goes through that auld wifie Skinner, and of course her niece too. I should sairtainly not allow the child to remain there, but there is time to conseeder of that."

Of course we did not get rid of the old merchant without the inevitable cake and sherry, and underwent the drinking of our healths. Bertie so far forgot himself and my feelings as to return the compliment.

After this announcement, I thought it but right that we should forget bygones, and pay a congratulatory visit to the bride-elect. So we went to the Lilacs not many days after, and found Mrs. Rennie at home, and gracious beyond our expectation. She was too much excited and too full of her own concerns to keep any animosity

towards us ; but we both thought her, if anything, more fussily nervous in manner than usual, as if she were not quite happy in her mind.

“They will make a handsome couple,” some one said to me, speaking of the engagement. I suppose they will. Mrs. Rennie is a handsome woman of her type—dark, with good straight features and bright eyes, and a clear complexion. Some of her neighbours and acquaintances think her very foolish, and that the match is beneath her. I cannot say I think that, for she is very vulgar-minded and selfish and flighty ; and though of course her second marriage will be a great declension from her first, old Mr. Macaldowie is far more gentlemanlike than many men who have risen by their money. Bertie is sarcastic, and says they are well matched.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

AFTER this time we seemed quite to settle down to our life and work at Ruthieston.

Altogether we are feeling much happier and more at home—naturally less of strangers and foreigners, more a part of the society of the place—than last summer. The country is filling up rapidly, and there are many little parties and social meetings for us ; more indeed than I care for, but I never discourage them, for I think it so good for Bertie to have a little of the society of his equals ; not to be left, as he otherwise would be, to fall back on Willie Fyffe and old Rae. He says sometimes he is growing sadly dissipated and pleasure-loving ; that we really must make an excuse the next time we have an invitation to a tennis party or shooting dinner. Then comes Mr. Lindsay, saying it is quite a quiet evening, and he has an old friend who is a great admirer of my father's works, and would be delighted to meet Bertie ; or Frank Reid Douglas says he positively must come to make their set, there is no one else who can play against his cousin so-and-so ; and thus it ends by our giving in. We have

had one or two delightful days at Piterichie ; though not so cosy as that one winter evening before Christmas. There is a talk, too, of a *great* picnic to the top of Cairnbannock for *my* especial benefit, as I have not yet ascended it. This is to be a little later, however. The Fergusons are all greatly excited about it. For my own part, if I were going to see the view from Cairnbannock, I should much prefer ascending it quietly alone with Bertie, or a select friend or two, to going with a large party such as this is to be. But we cannot get out of it. The Reid Douglasses are to go, of course ; and Bertie and Frank are now such fast friends that Frank's society, at any rate, will add much to my brother's enjoyment. Bertie has been thinking whether he might not ask to bring Willie Fyffe as his friend, for Elsie Harding is sure to be of the party ; and young Fyffe is so thorough a gentleman, and so well connected, that no one could object to his joining a party of the kind. Frank has made his mother look favourably on him from his connection with the Church in which Frank, good boy that he is, is becoming daily more interested.

Mrs. Rennie will not be of the party this time, we think. She is going south—to get her trousseau, it is supposed, and to pay some farewell visits to English friends, before settling down as the wife of a northern merchant.

It was about this time that there were rumours in the air concerning the insecurity of a certain well-known

bank in which many of our neighbours were interested. My brother and I had nothing to do with it; and consequently paid less attention to these rumours than if they concerned us nearly. It was only one day when Bertie had been getting an order cashed in Ruthieston that the matter was brought prominently to my notice by his saying—

“I am afraid it is too true about the C— Bank. Fyffe made a great favour of taking my order; says it will probably be worth nothing in a day or two.”

“They are quite safe here, I suppose?”

“Yes, quite. But it will be a terrible thing for many if the crash does come. Only fancy, Fyffe says it’ll be perfect ruination to old Macaldowie.”

“Indeed! Is his money in it?”

“Yes; and he is a trustee besides. The old fellow will be in a bad way. I wonder what Mrs. Rennie will say?”

There was some food for wonder. I could not help being anxious lest our friends of the Post Office should be in any way involved; but I learnt in conversing one day with Miss Skinner—for of course the reports were in every one’s mouth now—that they were all safe; though Miss Skinner knew of many people, even in our little world, whose all was staked on the issue of those few days of suspense.

And the crash came. How, it is needless for me to describe here. There was blank ruin in many a home throughout the land: much trouble in so small a place



as Ruthieston. The fact about Mr. Macaldowie was soon the staple gossip of the place, for he was one of the chief, if not the chief of the sufferers here. I was visiting Tibbie just after the news had come.

"Isn't it just awful, Miss Wingate?" she said. "Such a rich man, and to lose a'!"

"I trust it will not affect your future too sadly," I said. "This poor little godson of mine will be the loser eventually."

"Eventually, maybe. He disna lose i' the mean time. I may be thankful I can keep him comfortable and respectable with my own bit tocher," said Tibbie, with conscious pride.

Nevertheless, it would have fared ill with Tibbie before now but for her "own bit tocher." Joseph's salary, of course, died with him; and from old Macaldowie I knew his widow had never had a farthing's-worth of help, though he was very fond of talking of the great advantages he should bestow on his grandson one day.

Tibbie had joined business in point of fact with old Auntie, and now went shares with her in the little shop and the rent of the let lodgings; being quite able again to take her part in the active duties of the household.

We did not see much of old Mr. Macaldowie. He came out to Ruthieston, and was about the office there; and we paid up at once all the little account we had with him, but that was indeed but a drop in the ocean.

Bertie met him one day by chance, and would have stopped and spoken; but said that he hurried past without giving him the opportunity, and that there was a strange, hunted look about his face. We could not but feel sorry for him, and wonder whether Mrs. Rennie were coming to his assistance. Mrs. Rennie had left for England before the catastrophe took place.

And in the midst of these disturbances, so vital to those concerned, the great picnic-party was coming on. Weather was propitious, and the hills in their purple clothing most inviting for an excursion of the kind. I could not help being carried away for the time being by the spirits of the younger members of the party, many of whom gathered round me during the ascent. I took my little sketch-book, which had been long unused, though Bertie told me I should get nothing but a map or a panorama.

Bertie said it carried him back so vividly to that day three years ago when he joined the picnic-party; when everything and everybody were so new and strange to him. He enjoyed this tenfold more; both having me to share it, and also knowing so many of the company on such a friendly footing. The only drawback was that poor Willie Fyffe could not give himself the holiday necessary for accepting the invitation which had been extended to him.

Captain Ferguson was very civil and attentive to me, and took me to the White Tap, as the highest rocky summit of the hill is named, from which I had a most

splendid panorama, but far beyond sketching. He is an agreeable little man, the Captain; very full of anecdote and fun, like most sailors; but all the same we shall not be sorry when he relinquishes, as he says he shall this year, his office of lay representative, for he is a mere dummy in that capacity. My brother hopes Mr. Lindsay may be prevailed on to take office in his stead.

He is chatting away now, as we stand on the broad slab of rock, with the fresh mountain air blowing about our ears, laden with the fragrant scent of the honey-bearing heather.

"Some of our party are not here to-day—a counter-attraction. My second girl is gone with the Miss Glens to the great bazaar for the new Free kirk at Tilliemay. Lord Glenforth opens it."

"Oh, indeed," I said.

"Ah, the name is an abomination to you, I suppose. But some friends had asked them, and Lady Glenforth wanted some assistants at her stall. It's a wonder to me how all these bazaars go on; I believe there's one every day for something. People must be made of money; though some of them won't be so ready with it now, with this panic. Dreadful business that is, eh? You've nothing to do with it, Wingate says; you're lucky. I know some fellows who are in a terrible state about it. And here, that old fellow who has the coal stores is completely gone to smash."

"Yes, so we hear."

"Don't know who's to have the business, or if there's any business to be kept on. I say to Mrs. Ferguson we shall get no more coals." Then, coming up nearer to me with a funny twinkle in his eye: "Heard about Mrs. Rennie?"

"I have heard nothing lately."

"In point of fact, Mrs. Rennie's bolted," he said. "She went south some time ago. I believe she was half repenting of her bargain then; and the first whisper of the panic, she went and consulted a lawyer, and it ended by her writing to say her friends strongly disapproved, etcetera, etcetera—impossible for her marriage to take place—must be all off. She's a knowing one, Mrs. Rennie."

"I don't think she would be much loss to him, as it has proved," I said.

"Well, no: except that she could have kept the old fellow's head above water. But it was a foolish business from the first—a come down for her. Rennie—Colonel Rennie—was a very good fellow indeed. It's a good family, the Rennieshaughs. But she was always a curious body."

More than curious, I thought, as I took the little Captain's hand to assist me down from the White Tap. And then we joined some other guests, and I presently fell in with Elsie Harding, who had found out, she told me, a corner whence you could get a really sketchable bit. Would I come and try it with her?

I agreed; and we sat ourselves down on a cushion of

dry bloomy heather, and took out our pencils simultaneously. Elsie draws better than I do, and she had put in her outline long before me; and then, finding that we were for the time quite alone, she began :

"May I tell you a little bit of news, Charlotte dear ? It concerns *me* very nearly."

"Oh, please do."

"Well, Mr. Fyffe has asked me to be his wife," said Elsie, blushing all over her open honest face.

"Oh, I am so very glad, dear Elsie," I said, kissing her.

"Thank you. You are the first person here whom I have told. In fact, he spoke to me a week ago, and I could not answer him, certainly, you know, till I had written to my parents. And my father is from home, so I had to wait a whole week for an answer, and to keep him waiting all that time; the posts are *so* long here. And just this morning I got my father's permission, and I wrote to tell him, and I am *so* happy."

"I do congratulate you, dear, for I think he is very good, and will be worthy of you. And my brother will be pleased, I know. I may tell him?"

"Oh yes, of course. I think Willie will be sure to tell him himself at once, he is so fond of Mr. Wingate."

"So this is what comes of making you deputy organist, Miss Elsie?" I said presently. "Well, when you come to settle in Ruthieston you shall be organist altogether, if you don't mind."

"I don't think it was *that*," said Elsie simply. "He

told me—you don't think me foolish for telling you ?—that the first time he ever saw me, I reminded him so of a young lady whom—well, whom he had loved very much once, and who had made him very unhappy, but that he knew he could never have married her, and he had made up his mind to it when they parted. He was so open about it all ; only he seemed to like telling me.”

I felt in my mind that the comparison was hardly flattering to Elsie ; for though she was tall, with fair hair and gray eyes, she had nothing of the lack-a-daisical æstheticism that characterized poor Selina.

“I am very glad of your news,” I said ; “glad for both you and him. We knew, my brother and I, that he has had some little trials, and he has behaved very well. I should not fear his not making you really happy. I think he is Bertie's chief friend in Ruthieston now that we have lost poor Joseph Macaldowie.”

“Yes. And how sad, isn't it, about the old man losing all his money—old Mr. Macaldowie. Oh, I do feel so thankful Willie has nothing to do with that dreadful bank ; how much misery it is causing ! One feels quite selfish to be so happy at a time when so many are in trouble.”

I don't think our sketching progressed much after that. We began to find that the spot was too windy, and I proposed seeking a more sheltered corner. I felt very happy indeed at what I had just heard. I hardly guessed, however, that a few minutes later I should

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

"If you please, sir, Mrs. Macaldowie is very anxious to see you and Miss Wingate. She's in the study—been waiting near a twenty minutes."

This was the announcement with which Bella met us, as, light of spirits but rather stiff of limb, we reached our own door.

In the study we found Tibbie, with her boy in her arms. She was looking white and nervous, and I feared had something unpleasant to communicate.

"Please, sir, I was to speak to ye about auld Mr. Macaldowie; maybe ye've haird?"

"No; what about him?" said my brother.

"Well," said Tibbie, going on speaking low and breathlessly, "he's at my aunt's place. And he's very ill. He's had some sort o' a strok'; he was taken this afternoon, down at his office. And Mr. Lumsden says he would need to be sent into the town to the Infirmary. And Dr. Grassick says he's nae fit to be removed i' the mean time, and I—". She suddenly left off, breathing

whether she own it or not, must feel once on the discovery that another—an outsider—is to have the first place of all in a beloved brother's heart; but which, if she be worthy of the name of sister, she will instantly suppress, and crush down into the very depths of oblivion, as unworthy and selfish, and resolve henceforth to take the intruder to her own heart as well. And my next was, that if the intruder in this case were Ina, it would not be a very hard matter.

I don't think dear Elsie saw anything in the passing by. She was too much wrapped up in her own affairs; and we walked by the spot together without even a remark. I don't know whether she thought me very absent-minded after this.

We did sit down for a few minutes, and then some others joined us; and the next time I saw Ina and Bertie they were far apart. I could not feel much more interest in the general talk, or in looking at the view, and longed to be alone with him and quiet.

At length the descent was accomplished, the last good-bye said where we left the carts, and Bertie and I set off arm-in-arm to finish the remainder of our walk home.

But something held me silent and almost constrained, till after a while he spoke first.

"Lottie! in a brown study?"

"No, I don't think so," I said, turning to him.

"You are too discreet to ask questions?" he said. And then he turned and looked full in my face; such a



says he will, likely, in a little. There's nothing more in the mean time to do, but what I can do for him ; and now that I've seen ye, sir, I'll just away back, and thank ye."

My brother offered to accompany her. He remained away a short time, and returned, saying he could not be of much use. The poor old man was lying quite helpless and unconscious. We both felt very sorry for him.

He had rallied slightly next morning when my brother went down early to inquire ; but there was little visible change, little that any one could do for his comfort.

Bertie was obliged to go up to Pitcrichie Castle that day. It was a long walk for him, and of course took him the whole afternoon to go and return. But his interview with Mrs. Reid Douglas had been most satisfactory ; and he brought back an invitation for us both to come as soon as we could, and remain for a couple of days.

One day, however, a couple of nights, was all that Bertie would allow himself. He did not like to leave his church without the daily service, or to be out of call with the poor old man lying so ill at the Post Office.

But he enjoyed his day very much. Mrs. Reid Douglas was most kind to us both. I think she is really pleased at the match. Of course Ina and Bertie are much taken up with one another ; and I am left principally to Mrs. Douglas and the rigid little Covenanter,

Fanny. Poor Fanny is feeling rather forlorn. She does not see the fun of people being married. It is very stupid. She will be miserable without Ina; and Miss Harding is going to be married too, "just when I am beginning to like my lessons a little," she says, in a most aggrieved tone. "I am sure I shall hate any other governess; but mamma talks of sending me to school next year." Poor Fanny!

I had some nice chats with Elsie Harding, who is so quietly, honestly happy that it is a pleasure to see her. I think she and Willie will get on remarkably well; since she has the good sense to appreciate the sterling qualities which lie behind the young Scotchman's blunt and reserved manner.

Dear Ina is most loving and sisterly in her manner to me, but looks at me with a sort of tender appeal in her gentle eyes, as if asking me to forgive her for having stolen my brother's heart. After the formal good-night she came to my room again; and I was longing for the opportunity, for we had had no really confidential talk as yet since the eventful day of the picnic.

She said 'it' was all so wonderful, she had not been able fully to realize it yet; and after some little fondling exchanges of talk which would not be worth setting down, she whispered, with very hot cheeks and down-cast eyes, "if only—did I think—people would say—people might imagine—" and then stopped, as if she expected me to guess the rest, which at first I could not.

"About my coming to church," she said at last. "Because, you know, that was *really* all Frank's doing. I hardly had seen or spoken to Mr. Wingate, you know."

"Oh, Ina, I don't think any one would suspect you."

"I *hope* not. You know Frankie was always telling us about his school chapel and the choir, and how jolly it was. And he used to like me to go to St. Peter's with him in Mr. Hill's time. I am afraid I often went just for a change—I got so tired and sleepy at Dr. Rogers's.

"And then when we were confirmed, you know. Oh, it makes me so ashamed when I think of the stupid mistakes I made, and the questions I asked, now!" she said, with a little laugh. "I always thought him so kind—quite the kindest, best person I ever knew; but I never, never dreamt of anything else—not till that day at Cairnbannock." And then she hid her face on my shoulder. I might be excused for thinking that, if Ina was unconscious and innocent, my brother must also have behaved beautifully.

We had a long talk further, for Ina had much to ask about her unknown future relatives. My father, who was so clever, and wrote books, and was such a High Churchman—wouldn't he be very angry with *Mr. Wingate* for wanting to marry a Presbyterian girl? I believe she was ready to fancy him the double of old Mr. Macaldowie; but I think I left her at last with a very different impression of my dear gentle father. My

whether she own it or not, must feel once on the discovery that another—an outsider—is to have the first place of all in a beloved brother's heart; but which, if she be worthy of the name of sister, she will instantly suppress, and crush down into the very depths of oblivion, as unworthy and selfish, and resolve henceforth to take the intruder to her own heart as well. And my next was, that if the intruder in this case were Ina, it would not be a very hard matter.

I don't think dear Elsie saw anything in the passing by. She was too much wrapped up in her own affairs; and we walked by the spot together without even a remark. I don't know whether she thought me very absent-minded after this.

We did sit down for a few minutes, and then some others joined us; and the next time I saw Ina and Bertie they were far apart. I could not feel much more interest in the general talk, or in looking at the view, and longed to be alone with him and quiet.

At length the descent was accomplished, the last good-bye said where we left the carts, and Bertie and I set off arm-in-arm to finish the remainder of our walk home.

But something held me silent and almost constrained, till after a while he spoke first.

"Lottie! in a brown study?"

"No, I don't think so," I said, turning to him.

"You are too discreet to ask questions?" he said. And then he turned and looked full in my face; such a

have something to think of that would put Elsie Harding and Willie Fyffe quite into the background.

"Do you know the well-seat?" Elsie said. "No! It is such a charming place, a little way down the hill. There is a little natural spring, but it has been lined with slabs of granite, and there is a heather bank just above, where the young people and I have often sat when we have come up ourselves with the pony."

I agreed that it would be a nice place to find; and allowed Elsie to guide me down the rugged cart-track which led to it. But when we came in sight of the spot, we were aware that it was already occupied—by a lady and gentleman. I had recognized at once the outline of my brother's soft felt hat above the heather bank; and when we came opposite the spot, I saw that his companion was Ina Reid Douglas.

They were sitting side by side in the most ordinary casual way possible; he was bending down somewhat, poking with his stick at the granite pebbles; she had in her hand a great bunch of heather and the trailing green moss called here 'tods' tails,' which she seemed to be sorting or tying up. They were not even conversing. Most commonplace, most natural that they should have sat down on that inviting seat by chance, for a few minutes' rest; but the one momentary glance was enough to reveal to me that the presence of myself and my companion were, to say the least, *de trop*.

To be quite honest, I think my first sensation was the sort of pang which I suppose every true sister,

whether she own it or not, must feel once on the discovery that another—an outsider—is to have the first place of all in a beloved brother's heart; but which, if she be worthy of the name of sister, she will instantly suppress, and crush down into the very depths of oblivion, as unworthy and selfish, and resolve henceforth to take the intruder to her own heart as well. And my next was, that if the intruder in this case were Ina, it would not be a very hard matter.

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long, earnest, loving look, as if he would tell me the whole story with his eyes. And he has very eloquent eyes, this brother of mine.

"Yes, dear," he said at last, gravely. "I have been given a great gift to-day; I hope it may be given me to deserve it."

"My dearest brother!"

We walked on silently for a few minutes.

"I hope I have not done wrong," he said then; "I was betrayed into it—into telling her what has been in my mind for so long."

"Has it indeed, Bertie dear?"

"Yes; do you mean to say you never guessed it?"

"No, I really never did."

"Curious, *she* told me the same thing almost. Well, now for Mrs. Reid Douglas!"

"Oh, she likes you very much, I know. And how pleased Frank will be!"

"Dear old Frank! I don't think I need fear his opposition. But when one comes to think of it, Mrs. Douglas may consider it a great piece of presumption—the eldest daughter of such a house as hers, and a poor parson."

"Nonsense! we are as well connected as they are; and Ina will never be an heiress."

"No. Well, however things may go, the knowledge that *she* does not think me unworthy of her regard is something to thank God for."

"*You* unworthy!" I could not say more; but I was

taken up, I must own, with trying to realize the extraordinarily good fortune which had befallen my young friend Ina.

"I have been hearing another piece of news," I said next, to break the rather awkward silence which followed.

"What, your friend Elsie Harding?"

"Yes, and your friend Willie Fyffe. What do you say now?"

"Why, have they 'made it up,' as he would say, already? Well, that is about the best thing I ever heard. And you were so terribly anxious to get him out here, and give him the opportunity of popping the question from the White Tap!"

"Yes; they have been beforehand with us. But isn't it a nice piece of news, Bertie?"

"I hope so, I'm sure. Cairnbannock is a wonderful place, anyway."

without some further help it was impossible for him to make the attempt, if the grant were conceded, he should have no hesitation in setting about it at once. He spoke very earnestly, but without any undue excitement; and I think his manner told well, as once or twice there were expressions of approval; but when he paused I was much afraid lest some one should spring up and contest the question, as I had heard several not unlike proposals argued against with some warmth; but no voice dissented. And when the Chairman asked if this meeting was agreed as to the fitness of conceding the grant, the "Agreed, agreed" from all parts of the hall was unanimous.

I felt so happy and grateful, I should like to have shaken hands with them all round. I just caught Bertie's eye once, as he went back to his seat; and could see his great relief at having gained his heart's desire. And though personally I shall not now see much of his venture, it will be a source of unfailing interest to me, even at a distance.

I do not think there was anything more of deep personal interest in the Council meeting; and what is of general interest can be read elsewhere. But I greatly enjoyed the two days, and the pleasant conversazione given in connection with the meeting, at which Bertie of course met many friends. So I did not by any means regret having yielded to his persuasion, and indulged in this little bit of ecclesiastical dissipation.

We returned home together to settle down for a

short time of quiet before Bertie's wedding. It is not to be till after the New Year. Mrs. Reid Douglas would have allowed it in December; but Bertie will not be married in Advent, and I think Ina would like to have her Christmas at home, chiefly on Frank's and Fanny's account. Frank is greatly pleased at the marriage, and has quite a brother's love for Bertie now. Willie Fyffe's marriage is to be at the November 'term.' Elsie is going home for a month or so to get ready; and then he goes south for the wedding, to her father's parish.

Old Mr. Macaldowie recovered a good deal after a while. He can speak plain, and by degrees he became able to walk out a little with Tibbie's arm and his stick. My brother visited him constantly during his illness and convalescence, and found him grateful and pleased with his ministrations. The strong Church feeling which underlay much that was worldly and selfish in his character seemed to assert itself now; and, though he was always extremely reserved, my brother had good reason to believe that he was much more humble, as well as penitent for past errors.

When he grew a little stronger, he was glad to come to the shorter services at church; and it was touching to see him leaning on his daughter-in-law, as well as to see the tender care which she bestowed on him, leading him so watchfully up and down the chancel steps when he was able at length to come to the altar. The care of him seemed to be a perfect delight to her; and her

pride when she "had him a little better," as she expressed it, was only second to that which she showed in her baby's progress.

I often wondered whether he was more demonstrative to her in private than he appeared ; for he always had the same impassive, solemn demeanour, and seemed to speak to her but little.

It was about this time that, having been visiting Tibbie and him, she called me aside into her aunt's sitting-room.

"I was to let ye see such a present as I've gotten."

She took up a large sheet of paper which appeared to have come through the post, and unrolled it before me. It was a pen-and-ink sketch—"a study in black and white" I suppose would be the correct artistic description. A three-quarter length figure of an angel : the eyes closed, the hands crossed on the breast, the wings folded behind the head, between the crossed arms a single lily flower. The face was the same which my brother and I had seen once in Miss Hall's St. Raphael picture ; but here the artist had caught something of the awful peace and serenity of Joseph Macaldowie's face in death. I stood and looked at the sketch in wonder. It was a very beautiful drawing ; and the tears came into my eyes as I looked.

"Did Miss Hall send you this ?" I said.

"Ay did she. Isn't it real kind ?"

"Yes ; it is a beautiful sketch. Do you like it, Tibbie ?"

"Eh, yes! It's *so* like him. I can't think how she does them. And do ye see the angel wings, Miss Wingate? Isn't it beautiful?"

The angel wings were what poor Tibbie seemed to like best. I cannot say I agreed. I do not like that confusion of ideas—which always seems to me most unorthodox—which converts departed saints into those holy 'ministers' whom we are taught to love as a distinct order of beings.

I could not explain this to Tibbie then. I could at any rate agree with her that the likeness was very striking.

"Has she written to you?" I asked.

"Yes; and she says she's dying, poor thing. That's her letter; ye can see what she says yourself, if *you* please." Tibbie placed a sheet of closely-written note-paper before me.

It was traced in a straggling shaky hand, and I took some time to decipher it, somewhat as follows:—

*"Royal Hospital for Consumption,  
Brompton.*

"DEAR MRS. JOSEPH MACALDOWIE,

"You will perhaps be surprised at having a letter from me; but when you know it is a dying girl who writes to you, you will at least excuse my doing so.

"I have been ill for many months. I know the seeds of my illness were sown in my last journey to and from Ruthieston; I was so very cold, and my mind was

too much taken up with other things to think of food or wraps. I always thought I should shake it off, and went back to my work till I collapsed altogether, and through the kindness of friends have been sent here. Since I have been unable to work I have had time to think of many things, and it has hung heavy on my mind how badly I behaved by you. I do not think that you, or any one, really knew how much I suffered, how very much I loved Joseph Macaldowie. I know my heart was really broken then, when he married you. I do not blame him now ; I blame others who misled me and urged me on. They said a great many bad, wicked things about you ; I cannot write them ; but at that time I was so bad, so madly jealous of you, that I believed and repeated them. And now I want to ask you to forgive me. I know they were untrue, and I believe you were his first love, and that you did not willingly come between us. I have confessed and repented my faults, but I thought I should like to try and make you some amends before I die.

“ When I returned after my last visit to you I painted a picture. It was the best I ever did, and I sold it very well, almost immediately. I called it ‘ At the Gates of Paradise.’ I should like you to have had that, but I was obliged to sell it ; I wanted the money so very badly. But I am going to send you the original sketch for it. I think it is quite as like, only the colour is wanting. It has been a pleasure to me to look at it, but I do not want it now. If I am forgiven at last,

perhaps I shall see him before you. And I think you will like to keep it. I know you can have nothing of him but one of those vile country photographs—quite too utter libels. This is better at any rate.

“You must forgive this scrawl. I am so tired and so very weak. I hope you are well and prospering yourself. I have heard nothing of you since some one, I know not who, sent me a paper with the birth of his child in it—a son. I hope he will live and thrive, and grow like his father; yet not too like—lest he should break some other poor girl’s heart without intending it.

“I hope you will let me have one line, to say if you get the sketch and this letter safely.

“Yours sincerely,

“SELINA HALL.”

“Poor girl, I said when I had finished it; “hers is a sad story! She was in bad hands with Mrs. Rennie.”

“Yes; ’deed I do feel sorry for her! And, ye know, I think Mrs. Rennie was so hard and cruel to her. She took her up and made of her so at first, and then in her trouble she cast her off and sent her away to earn her bread as best she could. And she wasna a bad girl. It had been a sore heart,” said Tibbie, with a little half sigh of conscious pride, “to one to have loved my Joseph and *him* no carin’.

“I’ve been tryin’ to write,” she went on, “but ’deed I hardly know what I should say. Would ye be so kind as see if ye think that would do, Miss Wingate?” And



she laid a freshly-written letter before me, fairly written and spelt, but almost innocent of punctuation.

“DEAR MISS HALL,

“I have no words to thank you for the beautiful picture you have sent me, I cannot tell what way you could have done it and just so like my own dear husband as I saw him last. I will frame it and hang it up and teach my child to know it, if he is spared.

“As regards what you say about the past I am willing it should be all forgotten. I don't know what ill any person could find to say about me and my husband that always acted upright and honourable and a godly living young man, and me and him was friends or ever you came to the place Miss Hall so as it could not be that I came between you. I well believe you suffered a great deal when your heart was so sore set upon him, but you must reflect now that my loss is the greater. I am quite forgiving you all you may have said against me.

“I am so sorry you are so ill. I am pretty well myself and my child is thriving but we came through a sore time and I often wonder he is living at all.

“I pray the good LORD will bless and comfort you in all distress.

“Yours truly,

“TIBBIE MACALDOWIE.”

"I think it is a very good answer, Tibbie," I said.  
"She ought to be quite satisfied."

"I am awfully proud of the picture," she said, looking at it again fondly.

"Has Mr. Macaldowie seen it?"

"Eh, no; I would be afraid to show it him, in the mean time."

"I am so glad to see him so much better."

"Eh, yes; he's very much improved, and he's real quiet and biddable, poor man, and disna give any trouble."

"That is well. And is he not very grateful to you for all your kindness and care?"

"Well, I dinna know for that," said Tibbie bluntly; "I'm not seekin' thanks for doing my duty. But one day, after he grew that he could speak plainer, he says to me, 'Mrs. Joseph'—it's that I always get from him—'ye're a good woman, Mrs. Joseph, let them say what they like.' I don't know I'm sure what he could have meant, for I always thought it was himself didna like me. And now and then he repeats it at a time, when I've done any little thing; but he never says much to me. I think," with a little smile, "he likes my aunt the best. They sit over the fire together of evenin's and chat away fine."

"Does he care for his grandson?"

"Well, just at a time. He'll nottice him, maybe, one day, and the next he'll take no more account of him than if he werena there. But I've obsairved him

grow a deal keener many ways lately, and Dr. Grassick thinks he may go on the way that he is for years, though he'd never be fit for much office work, or the like of that. And he seems content and amused like with the papers and a book now and again, and doesna allude to what's by, or trouble himself, so I've no doubt we'll make out real well."

So I left Tibbie, with her cheerful brave contentment in the charge that many would have looked on as a heavy drag.

### CHAPTER XXX.

THE next event of interest to Bertie and me was the marriage of Willie Fyffe and Elsie Harding.

Of course, as it took place in England, neither of us could be present. They could only allow themselves a very short honeymoon, however; and the beginning of December saw them return, both very happy and blooming, to settle down in the smart new house attached to the Bank.

I often went over to spend part of a day with Elsie, and help her to get herself arranged and settled. It gave me interest and occupation apart from myself, for of course I looked forward with rather mixed feelings to the coming change in my brother's life.

Those December Advent days that he and I spent together were very precious ones to me—precious with a sort of sad sweetness, as positively the last we should have together *quite* to ourselves, the closing days of my reign at Ruthieston parsonage. And sincerely as I rejoiced at Bertie's happiness, fondly as I already loved my sister to be, I felt sad at the prospect of leaving.

I loved Ruthieston, its people, my life and work there. The change had come upon me suddenly ; and I realized now that I had been going on with a sort of unconscious belief that I should keep house for Bertie for an indefinite period. Our two years seemed to have passed with wonderful rapidity.

One circumstance rather saddening at that time was the death of old Barnard. We had long expected it : it seemed hardly possible that he should survive the last winter ; but he had lingered on through summer and autumn, till, with the first real cold weather of this season, his summons came. My brother was sent for to him on a Sunday, just before service. He could not go till it was over ; but he reached in time, not only to watch his last moments, but to administer to this faithful old member of the Church her last and highest consolation ; thanks to the merciful permission of Reservation for the sick, allowed by the Church of Scotland.

We did not think that poor old Mrs. Barnard could long survive her husband ; but she was past knowing of her loss, and very carefully tended by her nurse—as comfortable altogether as circumstances permitted.

We had some snow this winter, but nothing like the storms of the two last years. We were hoping for a continuation of the open weather, at least over our important time.

I used to think that the season must bring back painful memories to poor Tibbie, and that she must feel the recurrence of last year's anniversaries ; but she

seemed too full of occupation to fret, though her chief charge, her father-in-law, was now to all appearance as well as ever. He walked about the streets and came to church by himself, and went to his former office, and had interviews with his solicitor. When all the affairs were made up, and his large business disposed of, it was found that a small subsistence remained to him. A very small one; yet it redeemed him from actual pauperism, and living on Tibbie's and her aunt's charity. Tibbie told me he intended to contribute his share towards the household expenses, as he was able. I thought it very accommodating of old auntie to consent to his living on there indefinitely, not as a lodger but as one of the family; for, though they would have given up the spare sitting-room to him, he would not have it, but preferred inhabiting auntie's parlour downstairs. This arrangement would certainly allow of their letting the rooms which Bertie had formerly occupied; but at this winter season they were vacant, and I think Tibbie, at all events, would have liked sometimes to have the parlour more to herself; but she made no complaints.

One afternoon, however, as Bertie and I were sitting together by firelight in the darkening winter twilight, he was told that Mrs. Macaldowie wished to see him. He received her in the study, and they remained closeted for some little time. Then I heard him let her out, without asking for me. Finally, he returned to the drawing-room, sat down in the chair opposite me, and went off into fits of laughter.

"My dear Bertie!"

"Support me!" he cried. "They will be the death of me! Auntie and old Macaldowie!"

"What, have they got to blows?"

"Got to blows?" with another peal of laughter.

"They want me to *marry them*!"

"Auntie—and—old—Macaldowie?" I said, astounded.  
"Impossible!"

"Not a bit. Perhaps you think me insane. Nevertheless that is what Tibbie came about. It is all settled, and they want me to put up 'the cries' on Sunday."

"Well, as poor Selina Hall would say, it is really 'quite too utterly absurd.'"

"Yes. And yet after all I don't see why the poor old geese shouldn't do as they like."

"*Auntie* a bride!" I could not help repeating.  
"Will she join the Church?"

"I didn't get as far as to ask that. The best of it is, Tibbie is awfully angry with them—with her especially—quite takes it to heart. Tibbie, contemptuously scornful, is delightful. She came up much against her will."

"Poor Tibbie! I can hardly wonder. It *does* seem absurd; and they used to hate one another so! And after Mrs. Rennie's business, too."

"Aye. 'What a falling off was there,' eh? as Hamlet not inappropriately puts it. Well, I must say I'd rather have auntie than Mrs. Rennie, if I were asked to-morrow."

After this wonderful announcement I could not but take an early opportunity of calling at the Post Office to see auntie, and, as in duty bound, to wish her joy. I set off in the forenoon, and a chance delay caused me to arrive simultaneously with the midday mails; so, as auntie was occupied and unapproachable for some twenty minutes, I went into the parlour to Tibbie, and was the recipient of some of her indignation.

"So foolish of my aunt," she began almost at once. "What has she got to do marryin' at her age, and an auld frail-like man, may be left helpless on her hands any minute? 'Deed I don't know what ye can think, Miss Wingate, and the minister too."

"I must own we were surprised," I said.

"I'se warran' ye'se be that," Tibbie answered. "Me, I was never so astonished in my whole life. He'd been teasing and teasing on at her this while; but losh, I thought it was all buff and nonsense, and never paid any attention to them; but yon night I came up, he says all at once, 'Well, Miss Skinner, is you and me to be made one or Christmas?' 'Please yerself,' she says, 'for I sanna say mair one way or another.' I just stood and wondered at them; and then, 'Mrs. Joseph,' he says, 'I'd be obliged if ye'll step up and acquaint the Reverend Mr. Wingate that he'll be as kind as put up the cries for Miss Skinner and me, Sunday first; and ye can give Dr. Roger a call likewise, that he may do the same.' 'Aye, aye, that's best,' says auntie, 'for I'm nae



caring to go myself.' So I went, Miss, and I never felt more ashamed of an eirrand."

"I hope it will turn out for good," I said.

"I dinna think that's likely. My aunt is not strong, really she's not strong, for as smart's she is ; and she'll just have enough ado, in her old age, wi' him to notice and take care o'."

"Let us hope he will take care of her."

"I dinna look for much o' that. I know fine he's real selfish, and she'll just be his slave. I've talked to her all I could, but it's no use. Ach ! I've no patience with her !"

The subject was so evidently distressing to poor Tibbie that I did not pursue it ; but amused myself with watching little Josephie, who had just, after some exertion, managed to get on his feet by the help of a chair, and now stood patting with his hands on the seat with great exultation.

"I believe he'll run or ever he's a year old," Tibbie said, with maternal pride. "I never sa' the like o' him for crawlin' everywhere, and in ilka sort of mischief," and she caught him up in her arms all of a heap. "He's cuttet two teethies since you were here last, Miss Wingate."

"Come to me, little Bright-eyes," I said, taking him from her ; but he was of the kind that wriggles and kicks himself off your knee in a moment, and I was obliged to leave him to his own natural place, the floor. "How very like his father he is growing !" I could not help exclaiming involuntarily.

"Ay is he," said Tibbie. "Hardly a pairson comes into the Post Office but tells me that, and speaks about his bonnie eyes. I wonder whether Miss Hall could make a pictur' of *him*," she added, bending down over him for a minute with an expression of wistful loving grave admiration that made the homely face look almost beautiful; but, as he laughed back to her, breaking into the broadest of broad smiles, and the exclamation, "Bad loonie that ye are, go, go!"

"That's auntie through with the sorting now," she added, as the little old bride-elect toddled in from the front shop.

"Well, Miss Skinner," I said, as I shook hands with her, "I hear you are about to change your state, and I have come to wish you much joy and happiness."

"Thank ye, Missie Wingate," she answered, with quite a formal curtsy.

"I was a little surprised at the news, but I hope it will be a happy change for you."

"I hope it too, Miss. 'Deed I wouldna wonner ye was some surprised, for I never thought mysel', a while ago, that I was to get mairriet the noo. Ye see we divna know what's afore us. It's a great thocht to me: at the same time, when I sa' that he wasna likely ever to be away from this whatever, and that he was ill about it himsel', I didna see what should hinner me to tak' him, and dee the best wi' him that I'm able. It's just a kin' of settlin' for me. Mistress Joseph here, I believe she thinks I'm nae wise enough" (with a

little chuckle), "but 'deed I dinna see why I'm nae to look aheid some. I needna lippen to her aye to stop wi' me, and she's young, and has her childie to con-seeder. And a nice-like genteel auld man like him's good company for me at my time o' life."

I could hardly repress a smile at dear old auntie's singular views on the subject. We were here interrupted by the entrance of the "nice-like genteel auld man" himself, having come in from a morning stroll. He was hardly so fussy and stately as on the occasion of his former engagement, but seemed in high good humour; and when he patted the shoulder of the little old woman, who had turned round his easy-chair for him and taken his hat and cane, I began to think that this after all was a more real love-match than that with Mrs. Rennie would have been.

I felt rather thankful for the harmonium curtain next Sunday. And, being a discerning sister, I could appreciate the struggle for composure that underlay the extra solemnity of Bertie's manner as he "put up the cries"—*Anglice*, published "the banns of marriage between Joseph Macaldowie, widower, and Barbara Stuart Skinner, spinster"—hardly assisted perhaps by the consciousness that the next 'cries' would be his own. For on the last Sunday of Advent, their "third time of asking," it was followed by, "Also between Robert Charles Wingate, bachelor, and Williamina Penelope Reid Douglas, spinster, both of this parish."

## CHAPTER XXXI.

THE old couple were not married at church. I don't think either of them wished to make a public spectacle of themselves; least of all Miss Skinner. So the wedding was celebrated at the Post Office: in the upper parlour, Bertie's and my old drawing-room, before a select company of witnesses—Dr. Roger, in the first place. He was one of auntie's oldest friends, and attended by her special invitation; for she by no means intended to leave his congregation. Rae, the old verger, who gave away the bride, Tibbie, Mr. Lumsden, and myself were the other guests. Mr. Lumsden had fallen on his feet after the financial catastrophe; and had obtained a situation as local agent to the firm which had bought up old Macaldowie's business, and which (fortunately for Captain Ferguson's coals) still kept up a Ruthieston branch. He did not belong to our church, so I had seen little of him.

Auntie looked very neat and respectable. She wore a dark silk dress, which Bertie declared was suspiciously like that worn by Tibbie at her own marriage, only it

had no white bows ; and a pretty little black lace cap with pale lilac ribbons, a great improvement upon the funny old hat which was her usual head-gear in the shop. Old Joseph looked highly dignified and venerable and stately—quite a picture of an old man. He might have been a little nervous, for his hand trembled a good deal, but this had been the case ever since his illness ; his utterance, however, was most distinct, clear, and impressive. Poor auntie did not make very much of her vows, and Bertie and the bridegroom had to take a good deal for granted. When they knelt down for the prayers and benediction, I heard a stifled sob, and some one slipped out of the room. It was poor Tibbie. She did not return till all was over, when she brought in a tray with cake, wine, and spirits for the guests. Dr. Roger, being helped to a glass of wine, made an impressive little speech, half intended I believe as a sort of sermon, and then proposed the health of the newly-wedded pair, to which we all heartily responded.

I came away before the party broke up, and Tibbie took me to the door.

“ I ask your pardon for going out as I did. I hope the minister winna be displeased, but I sa’ that I wasn’t fi to keep from burstin’ and cryin’, so I thought it was best just to leave,” she said. “ It was just Mr. Wingate’s voice, and yon prayer ; it seemed to bring it all back upon me wi’ the great rush, till I felt as if my Joseph was kneeling aside me.”

“ I don’t wonder you found it trying, poor dear,” I

said. "Well, everything went off very nicely so far, and I hope your good aunt will be happy."

"I hope she may," said Tibbie, in a tone as if she did not expect it. "She's done it with her eyes open, whatever. Did ye notice what way his hand shook?" she added, rather ominously. "I didna like to see it."

As auntie was such a long and well-known resident—quite a Ruthieston character, in short—she had many nice and useful presents from friends and neighbours. Bertie and I gave her a neat little parlour clock for her chimney-piece, with which she was immensely delighted; and she declared that every one who came in admired "the bonnie *k-nockie*," as she styled it.

Presents began regularly to pour in now upon Bertie and his affianced bride. Some of Ina's were really handsome and costly, but I cannot detail them. One or two from members of his Ruthieston flock touched Bertie very much. Noticeable among these was the plated tea-pot and salver given by the choir, headed by Willie Fyffe, on the occasion of their last meeting before the marriage; also a handsome prayer-book from the children attending our little Sunday School, and their parents.

One morning that I was alone, Bertie having gone up to the Castle, Tibbie called, carrying a little bag, out of which, with some bashfulness, she drew a parcel.

"I was wishing so much I could get something to the minister, but I didn't know what I could get, so I'm just to ask if he would have these; they're my own

work, and the best I could do, but they're not pretty, only maybe they'll be useful," and she drew out two pairs of beautifully knitted soft gray worsted socks.

"Oh, Tibbie, what a nice present! how kind of you!"

"I hope he will not think me too forward," said Tibbie humbly; "perhaps ye'll be as kind as give them to him yourself, for I don't like."

"He is not at home to-day, or he would have liked to see and thank you. I am sure he will be pleased. And then your time and thought; it is really very 'mindful,' Tibbie."

"Not at all. Ye've both been awful mindful o' me. And if you please, Miss Wingate, I would like ye to have these cartes yourself, of *him* and me. They're not very good, but they'll help ye to remember upon us, maybe."

They were the productions of the Ruthieston photographer—"quite too utter libels," Selina might have said; but the homely charms of Tibbie in her maiden days were not unpleasingly reflected, and the figure of the handsome young fellow (leaning jauntily upon a rustic stile, with the crags of Cairnbannock depicted in the background scene!) had something of the lissom graciousness of the original.

"Thank you very much, dear Tibbie. You could not have given me anything I liked better, and I shall look at them often when I am far away."

"I'm so sorry ye're to leave," she whispered. And then, to use her own expression, she "burstit and cried;" and I had to take a consolatory tone, feeling

very near "bursting and crying" myself. For I was feeling very sad at the thought of leaving the dear Ruthieston home, and especially of parting from this honest warm-hearted woman, who stood shaking with sobs.

"You must not be so unhappy, Tibbie. 'The minister' is not going away, you know. And I am sure my new sister will be your friend, if you will let her."

"Yes, I know," said poor Tibbie, with a long sniff. "But new friends is nae like old; and ye've been my friend through so *much*."

"I shall always be your friend, I trust. And you know friends can always be together in heart, however far separated. We shall think of one another at the altar. And you know, dear, I may think of *him* too—as one of my friends in Paradise. And perhaps some time when I come to visit my brother and sister, I may see you and my godson. He will be coming to Mr. Wingate's new school in no time."

Tibbie looked down.

"Maybe. I don't know, I'm sure, how long I may be to stop at Ruthieston myself."

"Why, do you think of leaving, Tibbie?"

"'Deed I do, at a time. I think the auld folks would like to be just to themselves, and keep a sairvant. And I'm not to be their sairvant; and I wouldn't care to stop as a lodger where I've always been at home. And that's not just all," and she stopped.



"Why, Tibbie, you don't mean to say they are not agreeable, after all you have done for them?"

"No, I'm not saying that, though I'm aware they don't care for me aye livin' there; and the child *is* some noisy, growin'," Tibbie admitted. "But—I may's well just tell you, Miss Wingate—they're for Mr. Lumsden lodgin' there after next month. And I don't care for Mr. Lumsden; and more than that, I'll not stop in the house with him."

"What, is he not steady?"

"I'm no saying; he's maybe steady enough. But ye'll understand" (she spoke low and earnestly, while a dark flush came over her sallow face), "he's given me annoyance."

"Poor Tibbie," I said, for I could not misunderstand her. At the same time, I could hardly wonder that the sterling qualities of the young widow should find appreciative eyes again amongst her male acquaintance; but I saw that—at present at any rate—the mere idea was a pain and an insult to her honest faithful heart.

"Ye'll be as kind's not speak of it," she said, "for I've not breathed a word to livin' soul—I'd think shame."

"You may depend on me," I answered, "except to my brother, you know, perhaps; he might be able to help you. But surely this need not drive you away from Ruthieston?"

"Well, ye see I've no friends here now, unless the minister. And what made me think about it was this.

I've a brother—a young man—going to open a Co-operative Store at Abermurchie. He's not married, and I know he'll need a housekeeper; and I was planning I would propose to go and stop with him in the mean time."

"Well, perhaps that would be a good arrangement. You will have a nice church there too, anyway."

"Eh, yes. I wouldn't go where I wouldn't get my church. And old Mr. Fyffe is a real nice mannie, and knew my Joseph years ago. And there's good Church schools, too, if I were stopping. But, ye see, we don't know. We can only do what's best at the time, and let be the rest," she ended, with a sort of resigned sigh.

I have noted this down at length because it was the last really confidential talk I had with Tibbie before leaving. The time was very near now. I do not like dwelling on it: it was a sad time to me; and yet I am loath to take leave of our Ruthieston friends, as it were, even in memory, though I have little more that I can say about them.

Bertie was to be married immediately after Epiphany, at our own St. Peter's. We only regretted that, owing to the season and the distance, none of our home-party could come for the wedding. But the newly-married couple were to leave for a short honeymoon in England, and before returning Bertie was to take his wife home for a few days' visit, to introduce her to all the family collectively and individually.

Mr. Fyffe, his closest and most congenial clerical

friend in this diocese, had promised to come and marry them, and to take the duty on the first Sunday of Bertie's absence; the Bishop having kindly undertaken to provide for the other two, which were all he would allow himself, as it was an early Septuagesima. I was just to remain over the wedding, and then follow them south, so as to be at-home before their visit, as there were some little improvements, moreover, to be made at Ruthieston parsonage, which we arranged beforehand; so it was to be delivered over to the hands of the workmen, and to the proud charge of Bella.

I had various farewell visits to make, in most of which Bertie accompanied me: to the Lindsays, Fergusons, Glens, and various other neighbours and acquaintances, who all expressed a friendly regret at my approaching departure. But I think the farewells I really felt most were those to the humbler members of my brother's flock.

One of our precious last evenings was spent with Willie and Elsie Fyffe. Elsie is a friend whom I deeply regret leaving: during the last period of our acquaintance I have acquired a great regard for her. It is a satisfaction, however, to leave her so well settled; and I think she and Willie will be a most happy couple. She has improved him very much already, I can see; he is much less shy and blunt in manner than formerly.

The last farewell visit—the day before the wedding—was to our old home the Post Office, where we always feel the strongest ties. The old pair were sitting on

either side of the fireplace, looking comfortable and contented; and I think they are so, and will jog along very well, though dear old auntie is as staunch a Presbyterian as ever, and toddles off to the kirk every Sunday with the most supreme coolness; while Mr. Macaldowie, whenever he is able, goes to St. Peter's with Tibbie. But Tibbie does not look altogether happy: rather she has a sort of chronic aggrieved expression. I do not think she will be happy now till she gets away. She has rather a peculiar temperament: warm-hearted to a fault, she would work till she dropped for one who really loved her, and whom she loved; but her present position is anomalous, and she feels it. While she was auntie's coadjutor, and her father-in-law was entirely dependent on her, she got on well enough; but now she is half post-mistress, more than half servant. "Mrs. Joseph" is the person who is expected to run everywhere and do everything for the old couple, who prefer the fireside to the shop, the knitting 'wires' to the telegraph ditto; and Mrs. Joseph is beginning to find that it is rather beneath her dignity.

Mrs. Macaldowie, senior, was extremely hearty in her good wishes to my brother, as also to myself, regretting my leaving; but when I said I hoped to come and see them all again sometimes, she expressed a wish that next time I came I should bring a gentleman with me, "for surely such a nice young lady could na be long wantin' a husband;" for which well-intentioned speech she received an indignantly contemptuous

glance and a warning push from Tibbie. Poor Tibbie was looking exceedingly doleful to-day at the parting; and her face only brightened up somewhat when I produced the little dark-red cashmere frock which I had braided as a parting gift to my godson, though her first words seemed hardly to express gratitude.

"Oh, Miss Wingate, there was no occasion; really it was too mindful to take so much trouble."

There was no doubt, however, that she *was* pleased, as she turned the dress over and over, and said he would be real bonnie in it. Master Josephie had fulfilled his mother's prediction, and by the time he had completed his first year was quite steady on his little legs, and trying very hard to talk in his own fashion. It is sad to wish him good-bye just when he has become friendly enough to trot up to me and be taken up in my arms without remonstrance; and to think that when I see him again he will probably be a quite unapproachably shy little loonie, and hardly understand my English tongue. I asked Tibbie to give me a tiny lock of his hair, at which request she was much pleased; and she promised to teach him to remember me and to know my likeness.

"He's awful ill about the picture—Miss Hall's, ye know—and calls it 'Dada.'"

I could not help thinking that poor little Bright-eyes would grow up with rather curious ideas about his parentage.

Well, there is no use in dwelling upon the parting.

I kissed the boy, and poor Tibbie herself, and shook hands with the old people, wishing them all prosperity; and turned away from the quaint little shop with tears in my eyes and a lump in my throat.

But in spite of my regrets I had much to be thankful for; thankful especially in that my brother loves and cleaves to his Scottish charge. So many English priests, after putting their hands to the Scottish plough for a year or two, either break down, or weary of the expatriation, or accept a more advantageous living—and I cannot blame them altogether. But when one has health and strength and spirits, sufficient means, and no more pressing ties at home, this northern field seems to me to be a glorious one for any true and devoted son of our Mother.

So I doubt not Bertie will find it; and his marrying a Scotch wife will be an additional link, an inducement to remain rather than to leave. I am not afraid of Ina not proving the helpmeet he requires. She has had a good home-training of judicious benevolence, loving care for poor dependents, and school-teaching; superadded to which, now, she has the earnestness, freshness, and faith of a sincere convert. I ventured to remind Bertie once, half jestingly, of his former views about 'mixed marriages,' and his arguments, heretofore noted down, with poor Joseph Macaldowie. He said that at that time he certainly had had no experience of converts: that he did not consider either of the marriages under discussion could be properly termed 'mixed;' but that

to marriages truly so termed he had as strong an objection as ever.

Elsie Fyffe is to take my harmonium duties at present, which, as her husband is head of the choir, is the best possible arrangement. She also helps in the Sunday School, at which Ina is to be chief instructress on her return.

The wedding was to be at a somewhat early hour, the bridal party having to leave immediately after to catch the south train from town. Therefore Mr. Fyffe was coming to us the night before, to spend the last evening with us. We should have preferred this quite to ourselves; but dear old Mr. Fyffe is so kind, discreet, and sympathetic that we could not feel his presence an intrusion.

I cannot forget our conversation that night. We three sat round the fire; or rather Mr. Fyffe and I sat in opposite low chairs, and Bertie stood, as his custom not unfrequently is, with his hands behind him, in front of the grate. I think we were all rather gravely disposed; and from kindred topics, Church work, the present aspect of affairs, and so forth, we veered round to more directly personal ones, Bertie's thoughts being somewhat retrospective. He felt, he said, a little humbled by thinking how very small seemingly had been the results of his nearly four years' work at Ruthieston.

"Well, I don't know," I could not help saying. "You were told not to expect to be able to do much

proselytizing; and I think, considering the time, that you have had a fair number of converts, besides the increase of communicants."

"Converts! but who converted them?" he replied. "Certainly not I. That is one thing that has often struck me. Take any individual cases. Tibbie Macaldowie, for instance; with her the first motive was love, pure and simple; George Arthur, much the same. In Frank Douglas it was the effect of Church teaching and worship at his English school upon a sincere, earnest, unprejudiced mind. With his sister it was sympathy with him, joined to an unacknowledged craving after something higher and fuller than she found in her childhood's teaching. But in no one case can I attribute any conversion to direct influence of mine, in church or out."

"You have been here not quite four years, I think," Mr. Fyffe said. "I have been at Abermurchie nearly thirty; but I could count the converts made, as you say, by direct influence of mine, upon my fingers; rather, I would prefer not to count them at all. Yet—I say it in thankfulness, not in self-gratulation—the Church has a far wider influence, a far deeper hold upon the affections of the people, than when I commenced my work there."

"I wish I may be able to say as much after as long a time," Bertie said, rather sadly I thought. "Yet it would seem a poor confession to make at the end of one's charge, to say that one's personal influence and



exertion went for so little, that one's only converts had, so to speak, converted themselves."

Mr. Fyffe looked up, in the abrupt way he often has.

"Did ever you preach a sermon, Wingate, upon the Parable of the Leaven?"

"I cannot at this moment remember," Bertie answered. "Very possibly I may have done so."

"Because," Mr. Fyffe continued, "you make me feel tempted to give you one just now. We are too apt to forget—especially the young and eager workers amongst us—that the Catholic faith and doctrine here in our land is like the leaven hid in three measures of meal. It is hidden, buried, in many places seemingly lost, and ye would not know how it works. But," and as he spoke the keen old face lighted up, the large eyes seemed to dilate, as the speaker warmed with his subject, "it is *there* still—it has been there through all the years of change and persecution and deadness; and it works, sometimes indirectly, through the constraining force of outward circumstances, sometimes by the inward drawings of grace; always through its own inherent vitality, or rather through the power of the Holy Spirit by which it is pervaded. It is a great thing for us, poor, feeble, unworthy instruments as we are, to be allowed to have a hand in furthering its working, spreading it here, turning it there. But—*it works itself.*"

THE END.







